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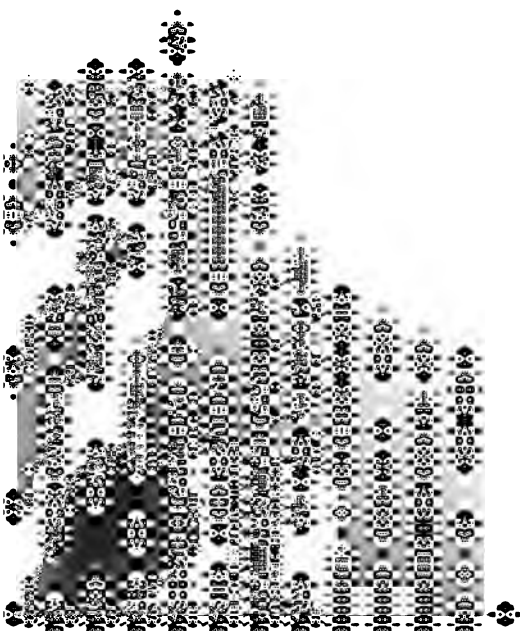
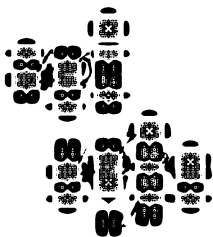
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THE
S P I T F I R E,

A TALE OF THE SEA.

BY
CAPTAIN CHAMIER, R.N.

AUTHOR OF
"THE LIFE OF A SAILOR," "JACK ADAMS," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE SPITFIRE.

CHAPTER I.

“It cannot be, Herbert, it cannot be. I can neither relinquish my rights nor my hopes. You know how I have been wronged; you know how bitterly, how cruelly I have been used. My brother—and still he is my brother—has cheated me of my birthright; and, not contented with crushing me by poverty, has imbued the father of the girl—the only girl I ever loved—with such hatred against me, that I am considered as a dependent where I ought to be in affluence—an intruder where I might have been a son.”

“ I wish I could assist you, master Albert ; but you know that I am dependent upon your brother ; from the day of his birth have I been under his roof, and although I know your wrongs and feel for you, yet I cannot league myself against the man who has used me well during my manhood, who has sheltered and pensioned me during my old age.

“ But, Herbert, you say that on the night when my father died, Rawlinson, the attorney, and my brother, after the sad event had taken place, never retired to rest, but having desired a fire to be lighted in an obscure room, they continued a low whispering conversation, and were only moved from the spot by your rushing to the door, and exclaiming that the chimney was on fire.”

“ It is all true, Sir,” replied the old servant. “ On that night when your father was stretched upon his death-bed, I was his principal attendant. He had long been drawing gradually to his last moment, and to that last he retained his intellect. I remember, as the lamp of life grew dimmer and dimmer, that he became

more anxious to speak about you ; your name was constantly upon his lips, and as the voice grew fainter and fainter, the old man pulled your brother towards him ; and I, for I could not be an idle spectator to such a scene, overheard these words—and I would swear to them, ay even if the axe were ready to sever my head from my body, or the dagger of the murderer at my heart—‘ Ronald,’ he said, ‘ obey my last injunctions—deal honestly, honourably by your brother. His independence will not impoverish you, and he is a good son and an affectionate brother.’ ”

“ I was not so far, Herbert, but that I could have been summoned in time to catch his last blessing. I had been removed from Raven Castle only a month previously to his death ; and although, the moment the messenger arrived, I started in great haste, and there was no delay, yet I did not arrive until the evening after my poor father’s death. Coldly, indeed, was I received ; and when I looked to my brother as my protector, I found rather the severity of a master than the affection of a

friend. There is some mystery in the affair. It is impossible that my father could have given all—all his immense wealth, with the large estate of Raven Castle, to one brother, to the exclusion of the other, who was his——”

“Favorite,” interrupted Herbert. “That there is a mystery, I feel—indeed, I know. I could tell you, young master, of an occurrence, but that I fear you will believe me crazy in my old age. But that these eyes beheld him, and that with unblanched cheeks I followed him—but I must not betray myself, or leave you to imagine that my reason has once wandered, my memory once fled. Be patient; you can do nothing by yourself. Time may unravel the mystery; but now it is useless to attempt to fathom it. Be content, master Albert, and endeavour to please your brother.”

“Please him, Herbert! I swear by heaven, that I have ever attended to his expressed wishes. I have become a slave—I feel myself gradually losing all my energies. I am no longer able to bear up against the slightest grievance; but when I am rebuked I burst into tears, like a

spoiled child, and curse the eyelids which cannot contain the moisture which betrays my weakened spirit. I cry, Herbert, d——n, I *cry*, when had I but retained my own soaring spirit, I could have stabbed—even a brother.”

“For heaven’s sake, my young master——”

“Call me not master, Herbert; I am myself a servant—a dependent—cabined—confined—with a master in my own brother, who will not allow me the slender means I ask to start in life, and who watches me so carefully that I cannot get beyond the long range of Raven Castle, to insure my own liberty by flight. But come, good faithful old friend, let us drive away this grief, if possible, these useless bursts of passion. Tell me this tale of wonder which failed to frighten you. I will be bound for it, some midnight story of horrors is connected with that room in which my father died, and which has since been dismantled, until merely the bare walls remain to enclose the spot on which the best of parents departed.”

“You are right, Sir,” said Herbert, looking carefully around him. “But this way, master

Albert; let us strike into this dark shrubbery, and before the bell rings to summon us all within the inner gates, I may have time to tell that which has only been told to one person, and he desired my lips to be for ever closed—not to dare to whisper even to myself the wanderings of my imbecile old mind. But I saw it—by Heaven, I saw it.”

“Who ordered you, Herbert, but my brother, to guard your tongue? Who else dares controul the thoughts or even the words, of a free-born Englishman? But I forget I am free-born and an Englishman, and yet I dare not boldly say that I have been cheated, I have been robbed; but I think so; and my mind cannot be chained into captivity, like him of old, who stole the fire from heaven, although I doubt if the vulture gnawed his heart more ravenously than the raven does mine.”

“Hush, hush! I heard a footstep; it seemed to turn to the right towards the long terrace walk which looks upon the flower garden. Stop, I’ll listen;—no—although I kept my ear close to the gravel walk, I heard nothing.

Whenever I think of that night, I see your brother's face—the pale yet determined countenance he wore, when he said, ‘Breathe not a word of it, Herbert, or death will follow within twenty-four hours.’ I have borne it, and should have borne it on to my grave, but that I feel it weighing me down towards it, and I must speak or die. Now, master Albert, pay attention. I know you will smile at first, perhaps ridicule me; but others believe, or they would not be so anxious to conceal it.

“When your father died, great was the lamentation of the household. We all loved him; his hand was ever charitable; the poor but asked, and were relieved. His tenants never were ground down for rents, when the harvest had been bad, or when untoward circumstances had rendered the payments difficult. You cannot fail to remember the distributions at Christmas, when bullocks were slaughtered, sheep killed, the castle filled with the tenantry; and long and loud was the cheer which followed the toast of your father's health as the foaming tankard was passed round, and

each, as he held the brimming cup, said from his heart and soul, 'God bless him!' You know that now, Christmas comes and goes without even a blazing faggot to cheer the gloom of that long hall, which formerly resounded with the songs of happiness, and which now is stealthily trodden, as if the walker dreaded lest the echo of his footstep should attract the notice of the present owner of that beautiful castle.

"It was near upon Christmas when your father died—indeed, it was on the twentieth of December that he breathed his last, and it was the day after Christmas day that he was buried. Such an event was sufficient, without the admonition which was so industriously circulated, that the tenantry need not assemble as usual; but they did assemble on the day following, and general and sincere was the feeling so evidently conspicuous; there was not a man, young or old, on the estate who did not swell the long train of mourners, as the good old man was carried in the large and plumed hearse; and when in the old church

there, the ruins of which are covered with the ivy, as if that plant would bind the half-ruined walls together, and like affection in its strongest sense, never relinquishes its hold, until destruction tumbled the one and destroyed the other. The youthful friend and associate of his old age read the service. The tears which coursed down the furrows of his face, choaked his utterance, and for a time he stopped. Then I tell you, master Albert, there were but two persons unmoved ; one was Sir Ronald, the other the attorney.

“ Around them they might have seen the sorrow of all their neighbours ; some hid their old faces in their hands, whilst their heaving bosoms seemed cramped for breath ; others, not ashamed to show the feelings which agitated them, held their heads up, and cried audibly. But over Sir Ronald’s face there grew no change ; he maintained that cold disdainful air which never varies, even now. He seemed to consider the whole pageant as a necessary toil, which he must labour to overcome ; and he looked at the nodding plumes placed

upon the bier, under which reposed his father, with all the unconcern of a man, who, having by desperate means arrived at the consummation of his wishes, cares little, very little how he has accomplished it.

“ The funeral was over, your father's remains quietly placed into the vault where sleep those of your mother. One by one the tenants slowly withdrew, until the sexton and your brother were left alone. ‘ Once more to the vault,’ he said. The trembling menial obeyed; and as he placed his hands upon the coffin, your brother said, with a low but firm voice : ‘ Rest there ; and never again break into daylight or moonlight, to know the change which must come over us.’ It meant apparently nothing ; the old sexton thought it a prayer, and the pious reverence of the son was applauded by those who attributed to grief what was the result of pride.

“ From that hour all has been a dreary solitude around us. ‘Tis true, we eat and drink ; one day is the record of the last and the herald of the following. There is no change ; from

that moment no stranger has ventured within the gates. It seems like consecrated ground, where no unhallowed step should tread. If this is the joy of life, give me the repose of your father."

"Proceed, proceed, good Herbert. You have in the fondness for my father, forgotten the tale which provoked these kind reminiscences—the story, Herbert, which my brother forbade you to tell. Time creeps on; we have but a few minutes more before we are locked like prisoners in our cells, and our master, like a wary sentinel, sees us in security and in supposed slumber."

"'Tis true, Sir. A month had elapsed since your father's death, when I, from some weak, perhaps superstitious awe of his goodness, resolved to lie one night in the bed he had so often pressed. The door had been carefully locked; and as I followed your brother to his bed room, I remarked the cautious manner he always fastened the door. This would have deterred most men, but to me it gave all the excitement of curiosity. I thought there must

be some secret to fathom, and I resolved to fathom it. It was in January, nearly towards the close, that I ventured into the room to sleep. There was no gusty wind rattling against the windows—no pattering rain to startle me in my slumbers, falling furiously against the glass. It was a still moonlight night, still as this one, but not near so dark. I did not undress myself, for I was apprehensive of cold, but lay down upon the bed, and drawing over me my large cloak, I prepared myself for sleep.

“At midnight, awaking from a restless slumber, I thought I heard a firm footstep near me. More fearful that it might be your brother than any other intruder, I remained quiet, and inasmuch as man could do it and live, I did not draw my breath; my eyes were open as now, my ears as quick; when, as if some sudden flash of lightning had dazzled my sight, and left me in greater darkness, I saw a blaze of light which for a moment deprived me of vision, and on hastily opening my eyes, there, full in my view, dressed in the dress familiar to us all, stood your——”

“Hence, babbler!” interrupted the stern voice of Sir Ronald, who laying his strong hand upon his servant, repeated, “Hence to your prayers; and remember, Herbert, that twenty-four hours soon flit away, and is but a short respite for man to sum up his long account. Albert, await me in the library, the bell tolls away. Poor blighted blockhead,” he continued, as Herbert looked at him to implore forgiveness, “would you have strengthened the brother in his hatred of his brother? would you have filled his mind with dark forebodings of the future, and fearful suspicions of the past? But that I scorn to wet my dagger’s point in such a lily-speckled heart, I would at this moment seal those white lips in everlasting silence. Hence! remember that the suspicious tyrant of Syracuse never held more attentive ears than I do. Speak but to any one living soul of this meeting, and to-morrow’s sun shall never shine upon you. Hence, and when I ring my bell, be in attendance in my room; and listen—you know me well—the bloody hand is not a more marked distinction

of my lineage, than is my word of my intention. To your prayers, old man ; you have hurried yourself from my service, which load, (for servitude is ever a load) pressed so lightly upon you, that you might have glided slowly and softly into your grave ; but old men are like babbling children ; it seems wisdom to be garrulous ; but the resolved, the prudent, the wise keep the finger of discretion upon the lips of silence."

CHAPTER II.

A LARGE fire blazed in the library ; there was warmth and comfort in the apartment. On the round table lay many books, in which were works, as if the reader had left them for future reference. In this room no one but Rawlinson was ever admitted. He seemed privileged, for he brooked [no refusal, he claimed as a right, that which others were denied as a favour.

In this apartment stood Albert awaiting the return of his brother. The eagle spirit of the lad had been crushed, the eye of youth which generally sparkles with animation, was dimmed

by solitude and apprehension, he felt himself a prisoner in a castle from which there was no retreat, and that which alarmed him most was the vigilant eye ever upon him. The surrounding tenantry were spies; and there seemed a superstitious fear of his brother. Sir Ronald assumed the severe garb of overstrained sanctity; there was the gloominess of the ascetic, the calmness of the saint; but on his lips was stamped that determination which was characteristic of the man. His silence, his reserve, was attributed to religion; his charity, for he gave not sparingly, was considered another proof of his sincerity; his abhorrence of wine or was-sail, seemed a confirmation of all.

The table was covered with the large volumes which were penned by Polycarp, Ireneus, Eusebius and writers of that class, who were the pioneers to remove some of the impediments which obstructed the knowledge of the early church: while near them was Erasmus and Luther, Knox, and other similar authors as references.

There was a great difference between this

man, and his only associate Rawlinson, who was an active, giddy, headstrong, pleasure hunting person, fond of his bottle, and latterly having become possessed of some wealth, which was attributed to the last will of an uncle, had appeared in an equipage, and supported an establishment, above both his station, and his character.

Albert had full time to pry into the secret of his brother's studies, there lay upon the table a large family bible, opened at the Epistle to the Hebrews; and the other volumes open on the table, were all upon this subject. His studies had evidently been to convince himself that Paul was the author of such Epistle; and to confute those who had thrown some doubt upon this subject, ascribing it to a Jew of Alexandria, seemed to have been his occupation.

Albert turned to the large leaf in the bible, on which was recorded the names of his ancestors,—against all but two, there was written, “died on such a date. The last whose name was rased from the book of life was his father :

the writing had been done hastily, and the date from the closing of the book had been blotted almost so as to render it illegible. With a pen, he carefully traced over the date, and then having given it due time to dry, he closed the book. As the leaves fell, he saw a loose sheet of writing paper, on which were several figures as if an account of large sums of money. There was an R, and opposite to it £20,000, below it an A, with £135,000 against it. Then was there a line of many figures, from which it appeared that the R was deducted, and the A added, drawing a kind of balance.

The step of his brother was now heard upon the staircase, and Albert, replacing the paper, stood near the fire place. His brother entered, and casting a hasty glance on his table, said in a tone of severity, "What, Albert, must you still be prying into that which does not concern you; could not even my studies be sacred from your curiosity? you have turned over that bible, what made you do it?"

"I did, brother," replied the disheartened young man, "I looked at the records of our

family, and seeing the date of my father's death but indistinctly marked, I made it legible.

"And this sheet of paper, Albert, I left it to mark a passage in Isaiah; it has been removed, it is now in Exodus?"

"It fell from the book, and I not knowing whence it came, replaced it anywhere."

"After, I presume," interrupted Sir Ronald, "you had made yourself acquainted with its contents."

"I saw," replied Albert, "nothing but some figures, which I did not understand, and which therefore I do not remember."

"Sit," said the elder brother, pointing to a chair near the fire. "Are you a man," began Sir Ronald sternly, "to listen to the tattle of old fools like Herbert, to draw conclusions from a brain-sick fancy of a ghost, and to court that imbecile old servant, to hear his croaks, and his forebodings about future dangers? tell me, why do you herd with those so much below you?"

"Because I have no other associate; you

scarcely see me ; at dinner we never exchange a word ; and when that is ended, you retire to your study, and leave me to myself, without a friend, without a companion."

"The light and the frivolous must ever fly from themselves to burthen their neighbours," remarked Sir Ronald ; "and idleness and want of occupation, lead to love and to ruin. This girl, this Margaret Rawlinson, who is the object of your boyish idolatry must be forgotten ; it is the object of my present interview, to warn you from that hope. Her father will not allow her to unite herself to one, who has no means of supporting her ; and for one just twenty, who has never had spirit enough to work his way in life, but allow his best years to pass in useless indolence, thus rashly to marry were to entail misery upon both."

"Is this fair or generous of you, Ronald, thus to rebuke me with poverty, to censure me for my idleness, when heaven knows that I have made frequent request that you would place me in any situation of life rather than leave me to

that idleness, which I hate as much as you despise.

“Here are books,—read.”—

“To what end am I to plod over books when I cannot gain the advantage of conversation with any one; place me any where but where I am—and I feel I have energy enough to pursue my own path.”

“To ruin,” interrupted Sir Ronald; “when did you see Margaret last?”

“The day before yesterday.”

“Where?”

“In the shrubbery where you found Herbert and myself this evening.”

“And your conversation?”

“Was of our attachment. I told her that in her society alone I forgot my miseries, and that being with her, alleviated all my cares and solaced all my inquietude.”

“A pretty speech for a love stricken boy!—I have altered my intentions towards you—I must see more of you—this room is now open to you, excepting when Rawlinson calls. He has business with me often concerning my estates—

yours should I die—by inheritance. Here you must remain for the present—and surely in the noble view of the castle, if merely over the sea which foams and breaks like a petulant child against the shingles, but is ever varying in its colour, some reflection, some occupation might be given to your mind,—in me, these objects bring with them a salutary lesson—the wave which succeed its predecessor is but a type of the human race, so its boundless expanse in the emblem of eternity, and its roar and its breakers, to the noise and the turmoil of life—its calm surface in the easy conscience which reflects the heaven that is within it; its agitation, the despair of the guilty, and the cowardly. You will in this room find much to employ your time; but think not of Margaret, she can never be yours, and above all, hold no converse with Herbert; I may discharge him to-morrow. The man who could fill the mind of a lad so young as yourself, with brain-sick fancies of mighty phantoms, is not a fit companion for you; besides those days are passed when the familiarity of old dependants was encouraged.

You should have more pride, boy ; now go to supper, and leave me to my meditations and my prayers. Good night, Albert, to-morrow we will talk about your future path in life, and think over what I have said. Margaret is a sweet girl, a lovely creature ; but she is below you in life ; besides for a young man of twenty, without means to marry before his mind is formed, it is rashness, Albert, it is absolute madness. Think of this ; good night."

" He is gone," said Sir Ronald, " like a stricken deer with the arrow in his heart, rankling and poisoning the stream of life ! what would I not give now for even *his* feelings ! Who is there loves *me* ? No one ; like the tyrant who is feared, I roam about the large domain which calls me owner ; but I have no one with whom I can associate, and the man, the only man who forces himself upon me is the mirror of my own guilty conscience, the participator in my crime, the only one who can benefit by my folly.

" Now will I endeavour to balk the views of Rawlinson. He lords it over me, aye, and

threatens me with exposure, whilst he drains me of large sums to meet his overgrown expenses; he has yet some desperate game to play, which to-morrow may disclose. Oh that I could be a wandering beggar cast naked upon the moors, rather than remain the villain that I am, and feel the hell—the fury of remorse that preys upon me! it is my only consolation to know that I can inflict misery upon others. Albert is gone to supper—having heard the beauty of Margaret praised—and be denied the prospect of again beholding her. These books have served their turn. I am believed religious—moral—calm—contented. Pshaw! how easily are we poor worms blinded by appearances!—how little do we know, whilst the honey of a smile is upon the lips, the gall which is corroding the heart! Night after night my father's spirit haunts me, I fear to marry lest in exclamations in sleep I should betray the secret of my bosom. 'Good night,' I said to Albert—would I could say so to myself and hope it might be so. To bed—to bed—but not to

sleep—the soft slumber which recruits the wearied, is denied to him whose conscience never slumbers—the pale wan features which the many disturbed nights have fixed upon my face—shews me every morning how gradually I am becoming the prey of my own mind—Ah !”

“ My dear brother, I have thus hastily returned to tell you that Mr. Rawlinson is here—he is anxious to see you—says he must, he will see you. I left him draining a tumbler of wine, which he did not wait to be invited to take—and having called your servants, he has desired some supper to be brought.”

“ Go to him, Albert; it is your interest to speak kindly to him—he is Margaret’s father; and bid him, when he has supped, to meet me here; go. That man is my bane—what would I not give to murder him! Ah! what a wretch, a poor weak wretch I am! it would be only another crime, and his absence might restore me to some peace of mind; here I will await him, for I dare not shun him—his coming at this unseasonable hour forbodes no

good ;—he too I have deceived—he believes me religious—one sensible of the committed fault and eager to atone for it ;—he fears I may betray him as much as I fear his betrayal of me. I must be apparently studious.”

Having opened some works of the ancient writers, Sir Ronald sat himself down before the large bible.

His sorrow-stricken features might have deceived a steadier eye than Rawlinson's. The want of sleep, the harassing of a guilty conscience, had contributed to waste away his form ; his tall, gaunt, ungainly figure, moved slowly forward with slow and solemn step ; the laughter of hilarity never brightened his countenance, and when he spoke, his words came forth in a slow, steady, measured tone, which his sepulchral voice rendered discordant to the ear.

Instead of pursuing any study, Sir Ronald tutored himself to hear with calmness any proposition which Rawlinson might make, being well aware that any ebullition of passion would only render him more likely to fall

into the snare of the fowler. Nearly half an hour had elapsed when Rawlinson ushered himself into the presence of Sir Ronald; with the air of easy familiarity, he threw himself into a large arm-chair, and saying: "This is no time for prosing over books, Sir Ronald; I came to speak to you on an important point, to which you will do well to attend."

"I am here, Mr. Rawlinson, and ready to hear whatever you may say."

"Your brother seeks to marry my daughter; it must not be, you must stop this affection. Margaret has this day mentioned the substance of a conversation, which, if not actually a declaration of affection, is tantamount to it. I have higher views for her—this shall not be."

"I have this evening spoken to my brother about it. I have warned him of the consequences of such boyish indiscretion; I have endeavoured to move his pride to his rescue."

"His pride! Margaret's pride should have taught her better. Hear me, proud man; I hold your life in my hands; proof as clear as

the noon-day sun," continued Rawlinson, in a low steady whisper, "which no subtlety could overthrow, no quibble evade, is in my grasp; and if you throw but a hint of pride! I'll humble yours, or lead you to adorn a tree."

"You are moved, Rawlinson, into an unseemly passion. Be cool; you tell me you wish this affection crushed; I tell you it is done. What more do you want?"

"Want!" ejaculated Rawlinson, "I want—not to be insulted. What did you mean by pride? the pride of the lofty family of Raven's Castle, which would be followed by an alliance with a Rawlinson! Poor foolish fellow! pore over those thick musty volumes which treat of past, and neglect the great book of human life which I study. When for that paltry sum of money I consented to come into your views—to burn that which would have passed from you an enormous wealth; do you think I was that idiot to disarm myself, by destroying the original document? It was but the duplicate that fire consumed; the real deed is in security,

where even your ingenuity will fail to discover—that might humble your *pride*, for guilt levels all distinction; there is no difference between forgerers, even although one may be garbed as a baronet, and the other wander homeless through life. The great and small are alike, when once the higher stoops to an act which would degrade the lower. Do you find this written in those large books, or must your pride be taught wisdom by an attorney?”

“Proceed, Rawlinson,” replied Sir Ronald, with great composure. “I am indebted to you for wisdom upon more points than one. If this is true which you have now averred, you have added a little more to my ancient lore, and taught me this:—that one man should never place confidence, even in the oath of another. We shall do no good by this foolish quarrel. I have done what you required; what more do you ask?”

“To humble your pride still more. Can I forgive this insult? ‘I called his pride to the rescue.’ Know this, de Lancy—for Sir Ronald de Lancy has yet a mystery attached to it—

remember this hint: that confidential agents know more of family secrets than family honour can brook. You are useful to me now, so I retain you. I have you in my net, through the meshes of which you can never escape. Now, hear me; whilst I lower your pride to the level I require—you shall marry my daughter yourself! She, who was too low of birth for your disinherited brother—too much beneath the pride of the younger son, shall be the wife of the heir who bears the title! What say you to this, de Lancy?"

"That you are intemperate, and wanting that coolness and discretion which has marked your character. It is impossible, without your imagination is heated, that the word pride could have at once made you enter on so mad a scheme. You must have prepared this coolness and pretended anger to seize at a shadow. I shall not imitate your example, and I shall not answer to your proposition until you may find it convenient to call before dinner."

"I understand the allusion," replied Rawlinson; "drunk or sober, I swear by heaven

that you shall marry my daughter ! You shall settle upon her the sum that I shall name ; and before to-morrow's sun goes down, the report shall be industriously circulated ;—that is settled, de Lancy. You know me as well as I know you ; we are both determined men ; but I have all to gain, you sufficient to lose ;—enough of this. What has become of Herbert ?”

“ How should I know ?” replied Sir Ronald.

“ You do know,” replied Rawlinson, “ and I know you do. Margaret was close to you when you interrupted the old fool in his babbling ; and after you dismissed your brother, she followed you towards the cliff, until, apprehensive that she must be discovered, she retraced her steps, waiting to meet Albert, who by appointment was to have met her there. She saw you return ; and although she waited until the second bell rang, when all gates are closed except to your intimate friend, myself, Herbert did not and has not returned. I dare say,” continued Rawlinson, with a searching look, “ the poor old fellow got so

close to the cliff, that he tumbled over accidentally, and will never again disturb us with a report of fire!"

Sir Roland's face underwent no change; there was a calmness over his features, which would have defied the scrutiny of a quicker eye than Rawlinson's. He answered in his usual measured tone:

"When he is weary of wandering, he will return. His age and long services render him a privileged man." Then starting a little from his usual reserve, he said, "He was the only one who could have betrayed us, Rawlinson; and such an accident as you surmise, although very dreadful, would not be so very disagreeable to either you or me."

"To you it might be serviceable, to me it is immaterial; indeed his life is precious to me in one respect, inasmuch as his evidence would tend to confirm mine."

"Yours, Rawlinson?" said de Lancy, as he slowly raised his eyes; "in what manner is your evidence to be given?"

"Merely in the event of your non-compli-

ance with my desire ; then I shall disrobe you of your grandeur, and turn you over, if not to the executioner, to a society in whose company abroad you may forget your pride ! I think it is Plato who says, ‘Pride is always the companion of solitude.’ In the company of other felons you will shake off that unwholesome reserve !”

“ You have quoted a good old writer, Rawlinson ; I will quote you another : Isocrates, in inculcating the duties of a sovereign to Nicocles, has this passage—‘Shew upon all occasions so high a regard for truth, that a single word from you may be more confided in than the oath of others.’ Now so little has this maxim been impressed upon your mind, that I tell you your oath is not so much valued by me as the merest assertion of the most perjured witness. If I am a villain, by heaven you are my master in the art.”

Having said this in his usual cold manner, he rose from his seat, turned the key in the door, placed it in his pocket, and resumed his seat.

"What do you mean, de Lancy, by this conduct?" said Rawlinson, his lips whitening gradually with apprehension. "Open that door, or I will make such a clamour that assistance shall come—and then——"

"Be calm, be steady, Rawlinson; follow my example, do not speak hastily. Now listen to me. Your death is requisite for my security; you are a villain in whom even another villain cannot repose confidence—the honesty among thieves is not conspicuous amongst us. Move but one inch, open but your mouth to call for assistance, and whatever may happen afterwards, you will never live to see. Now concerning this bond, this will, tell me where it is, and who knows of it? Mind my injunctions; you know my determination. One word of alarm, and this bullet is through your brains."

"My death would not release you one moment," said Rawlinson; "the murder would only hasten your end. This anger is useless; it will ruin both, where both might remain in security. The bond or will is in the keeping of another, closely sealed, enveloped in a paper

on which the whole transaction is recorded. I have directed that, in the event of my death, either by accident or design, these papers may be delivered to your brother; and more, some particulars of your birth are there! Put up your pistol; my death is your surest death, my life, the guarantee for yourself."

"You have not been a dull student in deceit, Rawlinson; you are the very prince of attorneys—a man whose wisdom in villainy would astound the most unrighteous. It appears, by your statement, that I am firmly in the net; but to live under such a fisherman would be to sport with the hook in my mouth. My coolness shall be my safeguard. This alternative I offer you: deliver up that original will, and I will marry your daughter; refuse it, and life being no longer worth having, I will follow old Herbert, but not before I have left enough evidence to convict you."

"I will deliver up that will to you under a bond, that a certain sum shall be paid to me. It shall be safely lodged in the hands of a third person, to be given you the moment the mar-

riage is celebrated. You will then be doubly safe ; for no parent would seek to impoverish his own child, more especially when he gains by her affluence."

" You have deceived me once, Rawlinson," slowly replied de Lancy ; " what security have I that this original document shall come to my hands ?"

" The security of my daughter, de Lancy ; this marriage renders both secure. I can then no longer threaten you ; you no longer can outwardly despise me."

" And my brother—what is to become of him ?"

" Easily managed. Do you tell him of your attachment to Margaret. I will arrange the rest."

" But your daughter loves him, Rawlinson ; how is her affection to be warped ?"

" Leave that to me ; to-morrow your proposition shall be made. She will not refuse it, and then the sooner these nuptials are celebrated, the sooner we shall be the better friends. Are you agreed ?"

“ I am ; and yet I cannot be agreed, even with myself. This is another act of injustice to Albert, who this day I began to make my companion. I was in hopes that, as I increased in years, I might make ample atonement to him for all the injustice I had committed ; that time and age might have taught me repentance and sorrow ; and that by doing that which was lawful and right, I might——”

“ Stop,” said Rawlinson ; “ if you begin, with a murder fresh upon your hands, to talk of prayer and your soul, I shall have no confidence in you. You cannot retrace your steps ; you must go on.”

“ You do me one injustice, Rawlinson,” replied de Lancy, quicker than usual. “ As I live here, I did not commit a murder upon Herbert. I led the old man to the cliff, abusing him for his babbling folly. It is true, I did keep him close to the precipice ; his old head turned giddy, and he fell into the boiling surf below. The insatiate wave soon must have torn the poor old man from his hold, even if he dug his fingers in the sand with more

than human strength; the eddy which whirls beneath the rocky cavern must have drowned him, and long ere this his body has floated far far away. I never touched him."

"It is remarkably well narrated; but gentlemen do not walk by precipices, on dark nights, without some intentions. Good night, remember to-morrow."

CHAPTER III.

LEFT to himself, Sir Ronald had sufficient time to ponder over his situation. His pride had now received its fullest abasement ; and as he thought the more seriously of his future life, he found himself in a vortex, from which there was no escape.

Sir Ronald had ever been treated as the elder son of his father ; to him was to pass all the inheritance ; and never had word escaped the lips of any which could breathe a doubt as to his legitimacy, until within a few months previous to his father's death. It was then Rawlinson began to ingratiate himself into favour—it was supposed “the worship of the

rising star." He was tolerated at first, and when sufficiently intimate, hinted a suspicion, which he did so guardedly, that it required an attentive ear to understand.

Ronald, although proud, was not without curiosity; and the more he attempted to check it, the more insidiously it worked its way, until at last it had so overpowered him, that he resolved to satisfy it.

This was precisely the net which had been spread for him by Rawlinson, who, if he knew little of the ancient world, was conversant enough with human nature. He had watched the trifling impatience of his victim to fathom, by artful questions, the depths of this secret will, and he had answered so guardedly, that the questioner became more eager to learn, without advancing a step, until the moment had arrived when his impatience broke through all restraint.

The secret was then communicated under an oath that it was never to be revealed, and Ronald became possessed of the astounding fact that he was illegitimate, although no stain

attached to the character of his mother, she, a natural child and under age, having, in total ignorance of the law, been married without publication of the banns, which, however, being discovered by Rawlinson's father, was by his advice so far remedied, that a marriage took place, which was succeeded by the birth of Albert.

The inheritance, therefore, rested upon the latter, for Ronald, by that law, was not legally born in wedlock, and was consequently deprived of that which he had ever believed his right. The secret, however, Rawlinson gave him to understand was entirely in his own keeping, the record of it having been transmitted to him by his father, who thus gave his son a kind of permanent hold upon the de Laucy family, capable of creating a very comfortable chancery suit, which, in those days, was a certain annuity to the attorney. So that Ronald thus found himself, at one fell swoop, deprived of everything; for his father had by his will (the contents of which Rawlinson well knew, for he had drawn it up) left one hundred

and thirty-five thousand pounds to Albert, which was the entire sum over and above the real property, which amounted to nearly fifteen thousand pounds per annum, and which was destined for Ronald, his father being led to believe that the secret had died with old Rawlinson, but who was much too good an attorney to allow his son to be ignorant of the fact.

The picture of absolute poverty, drawn and heightened by Rawlinson, the very idea of surrendering to his brother that immense fortune, which he had believed his own, led the proud Ronald to think dishonestly. Thinking and acting are near akin; we are told that he who looks after a woman with a wicked intent, has already committed adultery in his heart; and the man who entertains the slightest dishonourable idea, has broken through the barrier which religion and education had raised to repel crime.

Rawlinson had about this time become considerably embarrassed in his finances: he had lived far too fast; and although he had every chance of making money, owing to his rival

attorney being a remarkably litigious character, yet had vanity overcome prudence; and Rawlinson, a villain at heart, had gradually worked his way into the society of Ronald, with the intention of awakening his worst passions, of placing before him the sad event which must take place immediately the will should be disputed, and finally of leading Ronald on to think upon desperate means, whereby he might avoid this terrible end.

Words were at first industriously used to make Ronald aware that the secret would be safe; but that it was in Rawlinson's power, nay it was his duty, as the confidential adviser of the family, to put the rightful owner in possession. Still there were means of evading the law. In such artful manner, and with such palpable hints, he intimated that he was open to conversation upon the subject. Ronald, having determined to avail himself of any chance, proposed to the attorney a sum of money to bribe him into silence. The overture was rejected with scorn, merely, in truth, because the sum offered by no means came up,

in the attorney's opinion, to the price he deemed it worth.

"Consider," said Rawlinson, "the risk of being even a party to this transaction—inevitable ruin if suspected, transportation for life if discovered. The man," he continued, "who is to face either of these evils, must have sufficient money to enable him to decamp before he is routed, to retreat before he is made a prisoner ;—and four thousand pounds !—it would be mere beggary abroad—mere vegetation. Besides, my conscience tells me that even entertaining the subject itself is highly discreditable. It must not be ; Albert must inherit all, and you must be dependant upon his bounty."

The pride of Ronald could not brook this. He at once descended to the meanness of supplication ;—the sum offered was doubled, trebled, and at last quadrupled. This last seemed to be the mark which Rawlinson required to be reached ; for he moderated the anger which he had at first evinced at being insulted even at the proposition of a bribe, to forego his ho-

nest intentions. He commiserated the situation of Ronald, used kind words, and apologised for him in regard to his feelings having bettered his intentions; and finally left the room, with an impression upon Ronald's mind that his obdurate honesty might, by gentle touches of all-subduing gold, be worn through, as the hardest stone yields to a succession of drops.

The ice was broken; honesty had fled, and villainy was triumphant. The following day was eagerly expected by both. The health of the father was hourly becoming more precarious; and it was, therefore, requisite that the plan should be arranged before his death. No alteration could be made in the will; for old Sir Ronald had fallen into the sear and yellow leaf of life, and his brain, like an autumnal tint, had been stripped of its manly verdure, and was blighted by the frosts of age. It is true, he occasionally rallied into remembrance, as his last speech evinced; and in that speech there seemed to be a latent hope that if Ronald paid his brother the large sum left him, Albert

would have been contented and happy in his lot.

The following morning arrived, and earlier than usual Rawlinson called. The door of the library (for this apartment had been for some time the undisturbed retreat of Ronald) was closed and locked ;—a false will produced—and Ronald, an adept at imitation, forged the name of his father,—so like, indeed, that Rawlinson uttered an involuntary exclamation of praise. The names of the witnesses were likewise forged ; and the whole deed so closely resembled the other, except in contents, that the very men who had attested the real one of the old man, might have, to the best of their knowledge and belief, sworn to the false, as the one they had attested.

This having been arranged, Ronald looked up, and remarked how pale and wan Rawlinson appeared.

“ It is my first fault,” said the villain ; “ and we all tremble as we overstep the Rubicon of crime. When once fairly placed upon the inclined plane, we shall slide along merrily ; and

conscience, the warder of the heart, will cease to be vigilant at its post. How do *you* feel?"

"Like a poor wretch, Rawlinson," replied Ronald, "who having in the cold and dreary winter, trodden down the snow with his bare feet, sees before him a cheerful fire to warm and comfort him, a bed to lie upon, and food and victuals. Such as must be the sensations of that poor wretch, who had starvation in the foreground, and perhaps a gallows in perspective, are mine at this moment. I care not for the crime; for I would rather die a rich thief than an honest pauper. Rawlinson, you cannot deceive me, any more than I can deceive myself. You feel a little remorse—a slight increased pulsation of the heart; but you feel a vast deal of pleasure; and when my father is dead, you will repent in a new carriage, and think of religion on a high trotting horse. But to business—my father's Will."

"It is here."

"Then place it *there*—I will bury it deeply in the flames," continued Ronald, "so that no prying eyes, no eager inquisitive varlet, shall

grope out a particle to treasure up as evidence.
—Who is there?"

"It is me," said the poor old sick childish father. "Let me in; I am cold, and want some breakfast."

Rawlinson shuffled up the papers and parchments, and Ronald, struck by this extraordinary interruption, opened the door, and led his father in.

"Cold, very cold," began the old man; "but business must be done, and I want to count my money. Who is this?" he continued, as he observed Rawlinson; "he looks like a thief come to rob me. But I'll give it to thee, poor Ronald, I'll give you a hint. The man who leaves his affairs in the hands of another, is like a person deprived of both arms and eyes. But why does the nurse keep away? I've told her to give twenty pounds for my breakfast; and although I am rolling in riches, I can't get dry toast with my gruel."

At this moment, when the poor old man had just approached the fire, and had spoken this mixture of folly and of wisdom, the nurse came

running in. To Ronald's quick rebuke, she said, that she had left his father, thinking him asleep, to get something for herself, and that she supposed he had exercised the cunning of people in his situation, and had only waited her departure, to avail himself of the opportunity to walk about. "He must be cold," she continued, "for he is like a bare-footed beggar wandering in the snow."

Ronald started when he heard the words which he himself had expressed, and looked warily at Rawlinson. He was busy turning over the books, apparently indifferent to the conversation, the old man was removed, and the door again fastened.

"I cannot destroy the will now," said Ronald, "even I who planned the deed, am afraid to face it; he came upon us even in idiotcy like a ministering angel, which some have believed to watch over our lives, and guard us from temptation;—his very eye rebuked my intention; and," added Ronald with a peculiar curl of the upper lip, "he *mistook* you for a thief."

"What! frightened at a shadow, Sir?—Is

your deep reading, your fine philosophy to be shaken by a common place affair ? A sick man, anxious to avoid a bed in which he has been detained for a fortnight, finds himself at liberty, and walks to the room he mostly inhabited in health—is there any thing supernatural in that ?—any nonsense of ministering angel to whisper into one's ear to avoid a crime ? If that had been the case, why did he not interpose his authority, this ghostly authority, to stop your hand when you traced this forgery ? Do not think of it ; it is like a school boy who buys a wooden figure, and implores it to bring him good luck, and if he gets flogged for his idleness, he believes it the kind work of his Tommy."

" Let me go and see him in his bed, Rawlinson ; perhaps I may master this weakness, but as I live, I shake with fear, as much as if the officer of justice had arrested me, and the hangman had opened his sliding noose to receive this neck.—Wait here ; I will return in a moment ; let me see him in his bed, watched so that he may not again break upon our business," and with a hurried step he departed.

No sooner was he gone, than Rawlinson carefully concealed the papers in his pocket, and returned to his house. Rawlinson's pale appearance was owing to his having spent the whole night in preparing the document which he could not entrust to his clerk, who had drawn up the original. His plan was well laid ; he had now his victim secured, and retired to his home, where he carefully concealed the deed, to which Ronald had affixed his father's signature ; having this safe, he avoided Raven Castle, and actually left his house for a week, with his daughter.

During this interval, he tutored Margaret to follow his wishes. Margaret was then but seventeen. She was not a beauty ; but she was fair, and exquisitely formed. She had appeared to have entertained an attachment for Albert—nay they had already exchanged vows, and declarations of affection ; but in youth, although the fire of love may burn fiercely, it may soon be quenched. Rawlinson knew his daughter to inherit his own feelings. She had read of great and rich men marrying beneath them,—

some their cooks, and many, play actors ; and although she did love, as much as such a girl could love, Albert, yet she was never one who would have dashed herself over the Raven Cliff to be carried away in the whirlpool below. Every hint which a careful father could instil into her mind, as to the benefits to be derived from riches, and the misery of poverty, Rawlinson had bestowed on his daughter ; and he had brought her now exactly to his wishes, namely a cool, calculating, cunning girl, who would sacrifice any poor lover, to make a more advantageous match.

“ Well, Margaret, my dear,” began her father, “ I wonder what your poor miserable lover will do in your absence ; he will write your name, I suppose, upon a tree, and sit under its shade, to look at all that is left of you ! Tell me, girl, do you love him ?”

“ Yes,” replied Margaret, “ I suppose I love him, and it would be a great match for me.”

“ Not so, my child,” replied Rawlinson. “ By the bye, I have often thought of warning

you against this great match, as you call it ; but I could not be so indiscreet as to mention the terms of old Sir Ronald's will,—that would be a breach of trust, but I may venture to hint that, independent of the manly air, the upright honest bearing of the elder brother, he will be far richer, that is, he will inherit all the estates, monies, &c, and would be a match that half the nobility of England might covet."

" And being so rich, so upright, &c. papa, as you say, would not of course condescend to marry any one beneath him in rank."

" I scarcely think you are right there, Margaret, for it so happens that I know he is attached to you."

" To me ! it is impossible. I have never seen him more than twice in my life, and then he turned from me as if I had the leprosy."

" And not a bad proof of love either ; there are many men who become so much in love, that they dare not even look upon the face of her they most admire ; nay some, and one I know, as brave, and as gallant a man, as ever faced his country's enemies, who, when he

made a proposition of marriage turned his back upon the lady."

"I'm sure," replied Margaret, "I should have turned my back upon him. But is this true that Albert, when his father dies, will not share equally with his elder brother?"

"Child," replied Rawlinson, "it is never done; the elder son inherits all, and the younger ones are protected by him; it is one of the wisest laws, that of inheritance by primogeniture, which was ever framed; it keeps the name and the greatness of the family together; whereas a sub-division would impoverish all. I cannot help thinking but that Ronald loves you. Albert is sent to a friend in the Highlands, as you know, little Mischief! he went yesterday. The father may still live years; and until his death, his will must be unknown; however, I shall advise, should he not recover, that Ronald becomes the manager of the property, or that *I*, as a matter of business, should arrange the affairs. Now, Margaret, could you forget Albert and marry Ronald, if he should hereafter—I speak merely of a possibility—be

induced to make you a declaration of affection?"

"I must say that I should like," replied the girl, "to be the lady of Raven Castle: and Lady de Lancy would not sound amiss to my ears."

"You do not love him, Margaret?" said the attorney, with a smile.

"Not just yet," she replied; "but I am a good daughter, and I can do as I am bid."

It was a week before Rawlinson returned. Old Sir Ronald lingered on for more than six months, when on the 20th of December he died.

Two years had nearly elapsed from the time of old Sir Ronald's death, until the evening before-mentioned, when Ronald disturbed the conversation between Albert and Herbert. It will be seen, that Rawlinson, directly after the forgery, had planned the marriage of his daughter with the future baronet, and that she, although continuing her clandestine visits to Albert, was, from her careless educa-

tion, secretly not without hope that she might succeed in uniting herself with Sir Ronald.

The day old Sir Ronald died, a counterfeit copy of his will, with numerous papers, letters, records, &c., were destroyed by his eldest son and Rawlinson; and old Herbert's story of the fire was in strict accordance with truth. From that hour Ronald de Lancy had shunned mankind; he had endeavoured, in solitude, to shield himself from the tyranny of his own heart; he could not dive into society and dissipation, for his whole nature was against it. He who before was bold and proud, now slunk about his grounds, ashamed to meet his tenantry; anxious to avoid even his brother, he lived like a respited criminal, uncertain when the axe might fall; and although he turned his thoughts to religion, yet was his reading such as, if possible, to discredit it. Every page which could be twisted or distorted so as to render a conviction of atheism probable, he seized it, treasured it, and would

frequently say to himself: "If there is no hereafter, then am I happy!"

Amongst the people who sometimes gained an unwelcome admittance, was the Rev. James Molesworth: he had been old Sir Ronald de Lancy's youngest and oldest friend, and now clung with renewed affection to the unworthy representative of Raven Castle. He had observed the sudden change, this apparent religious melancholy which had crept over his old friend's son. Clergymen are privileged people, they approach armed with the words, "Peace be to this house, and all herein;" they heal the wounds of the bruised heart, and they give consolation where trouble and anxieties prevail.

The morning after Sir Ronald's conversation with Rawlinson relative to the marriage of his daughter, Mr. Molesworth called. He found Sir Ronald in his library, the Bible open, references at hand, and the reader pale with apparent study.

After the first salutation, Mr. Molesworth began, by observing:—"That there was a

time for all things, and that Sir Ronald injured his constitution, and impaired his health by his over-zealous search into the holy writings. Remember, my young friend," he said, "we are not to indulge in any occupation, however pleasurable, that ruins our health; and when so indulged, even a religious work becomes dissipation; for our health is given us, as a gift which we are bound to preserve; and the mind never can be so active when the body is enfeebled."

"Thank you kindly, Sir," said Sir Ronald, in his usual steady manner; "I may truly say, 'The labour we delight in physics pain.' I have not recovered, as yet, all the recollection of former happiness; and I feel as a weed thrown upon the wide Atlantic, to float with the impulse of the current."

"Pardon me, Sir Ronald, but I think you have not stated your case fairly; you do not go with the current, but you oppose it. The young baronet should not confine himself within his walls, hoarding his riches; your enjoyments of life would tend much to alleviate

the miseries of hundreds ; and again, although a clergyman, I am bound to tell you that the constant perseverance in such seclusion as yours would become criminal. The poor around you want your assistance, and if fortune has been propitious to you, your hand should be extended towards others."

" Whatever you demand for the poor, Mr. Molesworth, I am ready to advance ; name but the sum, and this instant it is yours."

" Charity, Sir Ronald, does not always consist in sending money ; it consists in visiting the fatherless and the widows in affliction ; and a boon from the hand of the man who owns the territory, is three times as consolatory, as when, as a matter of convenience, the money is sent through another. Do you imagine that the fakir who sits all day long until his nails grow through his hands, although he gives all he gets to the poor, is an acceptable person, in comparison with him who goes through the several duties of life, who sees the enjoyments of others, and who contributes to them by his presence ? You should marry, Sir Ronald."

"Marry!" responded Sir Ronald, in a deep sepulchral voice. "Before long, Mr. Molesworth, I shall require your services on that account."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Molesworth, "that does rejoice me. Raven Castle will no longer be an inclosure; as in the feudal times, the old hall will resound with merriment; and I, being proud of the service committed to my charge, shall, when that ceremony is over, be as blythe and as gay as the youngest! If I do not trespass much upon my intimacy, may I ask the name of her who is so shortly to come amongst us?"

"Margaret Rawlinson."

"What do I hear, Sir Ronald? Margaret Rawlinson!—the daughter of your attorney!—It is well your father sleeps under a heavy stone, or his old form might haunt the house, which thus can lower itself."

"Tell me, Sir," said Sir Rowland, "have the dead ever left their tombs to visit those on earth? or is it your opinion, that affection retains its hold, and acts as a ministering angel?"

“ It is a subject which I fain would evade, for no one can positively answer the question.—All nations have records of the dead having revisited the earth;—but it is a record, at which the philosopher laughs at in day-light, and dreads in darkness.—I have a favour to ask you. Fix upon any other member of our church to unite you ; I cannot, Sir Ronald,—I will not be the man.”

“ Your reason, Sir ?”

“ Your father would never have sanctioned such an alliance. He was proud of his rank, and of his partner’s rank ; and well I remember his scrupulous attention to some whim of hers, when he remarried her long after your birth.”

“ Ah !”

“ Yes, indeed, the registry is with me, for I performed the service. She, under her maiden name, went through the ceremony, dressed as a bride,—three persons only were present—myself, my clerk, and old Rawlinson ; although, by some accident, old Herbert and others heard of the event. Little did old Rawlinson think, that a Sir Ronald de Lancy was

to wed his grand-daughter ; and luckily I only survive to witness the degradation !—Good bye, Sir Ronald ! I was in hopes I could have withdrawn you from your seclusion ; but, old fool that I was ! I forgot that, even in seclusion, love is more dangerous than in the giddy whirlpool of pleasure.”

At this moment Albert entered the room. He announced the arrival of Rawlinson, who was as usual excessively anxious to see Sir Ronald.

“ He has brought the settlements for signature, I suppose, Sir Ronald,” said Molesworth, “ I will not witness them, and luckily Albert is under age. Good bye, good bye, Albert,—when your brother weds Margaret Rawlinson I must withdraw.—Heavens, how pale you look !”

“ It is nothing,” interrupted Sir Ronald, “ good morning Sir !—and with all the stateliness of manner for which he was noted, he bowed the reverend gentleman out of the room, and before he could pave the way for that which he knew would give his brother the keenest pain, the attorney made his appearance.

"I am come to sign and to seal," said Rawlinson.

"Leave me," said Sir Ronald, "I will explain to you the nature of Mr. Molesworth's remarks another time."

"I obey," replied Albert; "but I have another message to deliver—Herbert is no where to be found—and some of the servants have asked leave to search for their old friend."

"Let them search," was Sir Ronald's reply.

"My mind," began Sir Ronald as his brother left the room, "is fixed—I am prepared to wed your daughter—where is she?"

"Not far—your courtship need not be long—I have prepared her; ask her hand—it is your's; return afterwards with me to my house—and then the settlements can be arranged."

"You are quick, Rawlinson, in your department; how many a poor lover sighs over the long days the law requires to bind him to all he holds dear; whilst to me—the actual deeds are prepared in one short night, even before I have made proposals to the woman who is to be—not my love—but my wife!"

“ The world and you are differently placed—come, it must be done this day—we can walk—the long shrubbery will be the fittest place—poor old Herbert, Sir Ronald, will not overhear us—he sleeps quietly enough—and the search on the part of the court will be unavailing !”

From the terrace walk which skirted the flower garden of Raven Castle there ran a long winding shrubbery. The hand which planted this thick retreat had wound the path in such constant windings, that the eye could never command a view of more than fifty feet. In the little recesses occasionally formed by sharper turnings there were rustic seats, in summer sheltered from the sun, in winter protected from the breeze. There the lilac had been planted so as to overhang the seat, as if Flora would delight in it as a throne surrounded by the thick blossoms of this elegant tree and inhaling its beautiful perfume ; the next was overhung by liburnam, and Danae might fancy herself under a shower of gold ; in another the thickly flowering honeysuckle arched itself gracefully over the seat ; whilst the next, which

Margaret Rawlinson reposed upon, was in reality, 'Love amongst the roses.' Further on was another—the jessamine wound gracefully around it; the small white blossom looking like stars amid the bosom of the night. And thus each seat was centred in a bower—each bower being composed of only one kind of flower. The walk terminated with a gate; and the kindness of old Sir Ronald had confided a key to the family of the Rawlinson's, who had long been privileged to walk therein.

In this walk had the cold hearted Margaret often met Albert. Here had she plighted her truth to him; and on the very seat where she now sat had the flower of Venus often witnessed those sweet kisses which lovers imprint, and which, as a poet has described them, is a kiss of youth, and beauty, and love, all concentrated into one focus!—a hypocrite in her heart, she disguised her real feelings! and while she amused herself in fanning the flame which burnt brightly in young Albert's heart, her own beat with higher expectation; the hint which her father had given her weeks before, of the possi-

bility of becoming Lady de Lancy; the envy, the jealousy which such an union would infallibly produce in the Molesworth family—a family hated by the dishonest attorney, because their characters were so opposite—had not been lost upon Margaret. It is true, she did not love Sir Ronald; his tall gaunt figure—his natural austerity of manner—his cold measured mode of address, was not such as would win young hearts; and to this day, when past nineteen years of age, Sir Ronald had never deigned to enter into any conversation with her, beyond a few seconds in duration.

In the bower, which by Albert had been termed Venuses retreat, for he saw grace in all her steps and heaven in her eye, sat Margaret Rawlinson, awaiting Sir Ronald. She had been told by her father that an overture of marriage had been made by the baronet to him, for her. He pointed out in terms likely to captivate a heart like his daughter, all the advantages derivable from such an union.

Albert was a pauper—he must be discarded. Sir Ronald had wealth and a title, was the larg-

est possessor of property in that part of England. It was prudent to sacrifice a little love to a vast accession of wealth and power. She did not hesitate; she agreed at once to marry him; and she was now placed in this bower to receive his addresses. Her heart palpitated a little—not with love—but with hope!

Rawlinson had walked with Sir Ronald to the beginning of the shrubbery, and there left him, in order to find Albert, and prepare him for the event—if possible to poison his mind more strongly against his brother; and, in despair, to leave him to meditate either a flight, or a personal rencontre—which would force Sir Ronald to find some employment for his brother elsewhere.

He found Albert instantly, and after a very few preliminary remarks came at once to the point, and hinted the connexion with the family about to take place,—“They are now in the shrubbery,” he said,—“but I must be home, for my time is much occupied.”

Albert for a moment stood like a statue; a sudden thought seemed to overpower him; and

he rushed into the thicket as if to shelter himself from the world.

As Margaret sat counting the minutes when her vanity should be gratified, her hope realized, she heard the slow steps of Sir Ronald advancing; his was not the light footfall of impatient love; but he lingered at every step, and was anxious to prolong the time before his tongue should bind him to marriage. He neither loved nor hated the object; she was perfectly indifferent to him. But his connection with Rawlinson required this security for himself; and well he argued that this marriage, which was a matter of necessity—might, by good management, become one of comparative happiness. "There is no necessity," thought he, "of attachment to ensure contentment; love is much stronger sometimes after marriage than before." Whilst pondering on the emergency of the case, he turned the corner, and beheld his future wife reclining in the bower. She had evidently taken considerable care to show her figure to its greatest advantage, and fastidious indeed must the man have been who

could have seen that woman, and not acknowledged her beauty and her grace.

Margaret darted up as if unprepared for such interruption; and after bowing in a distant and reserved manner, seemed anxious to avoid Sir Ronald, and not intrude upon his privacy. He, however, was not deceived by this manœuvre. Rawlinson had told him where to find his daughter, and he had had sufficient experience of his future father-in-law to know, that she had been ably tutored, expected the offer, and was ready to accept him.

With more than usual activity of manner, Sir Ronald sprang forward, and took her hand, which she, with admirable surprise, attempted, yet did not accomplish,—to withdraw. Here was no hesitation in Sir Ronald's manner, for there was no love to agitate him; he spoke to her with the ease and familiarity of an old acquaintance; and leading her back to the seat she had forsaken, he paid her but an honest compliment when he remarked that the bower received new beauties from the graceful form which adorned it.

So well managed was the interview by Sir Ronald, that even Margaret was deceived into liking him. He spoke with vivacity and elegance. He inquired into her occupations and amusements ; rallied her on her nocturnal rambles with her brother ; and so completely won her wavering heart, that they might have mistaken themselves for lovers.

Still Sir Ronald felt the indelicacy of his situation, to offer his hand after a quarter of an hour's conversation, seemed precipitate ; and he was more than once inclined to withdraw without effecting his purpose. The idea of his personal security in this marriage, however, prevailed over his prudence, and he now approached the subject by endeavouring to find out if Margaret, in reality, was attached to his brother.

" You meet him frequently," he remarked, " Miss Rawlinson, and he poor fellow wears but a sad countenance when occupied elsewhere."

" Poor boy,"—remarked the artful girl, " it would be too ridiculous, Sir Ronald, to fall in love with one so young,—as a companion he is

cheerful—and perhaps I may have been fortunate enough to amuse him ; but as to love—that is absurd !”

“He is too young, Miss Rawlinson—altogether too young, to form any alliance. Besides his fretful temper, his want of any occupation in life, and more than all, is want of fortune, his much against any connexion, such as marriage.”

Margaret smiled at the last word, and added, “That such an idea as uniting herself with the proud family of Sir Ronald de Lancy, never had entered her imagination.”

“And yet,” interrupted Sir Ronald, “one so beautiful, so graceful as Margaret Rawlinson might aspire to any hand. I should have thought our family honoured by such an acquisition ; and if Margaret Rawlinson could bestow herself upon such an unworthy object as myself, this hand is hers !”

Margaret remained silent, Sir Ronald became gradually warmer in his supplications. The bashful maiden still observed a guarded silence ; until the question was put in plainer language, and at last a timid consent was expressed. Sir

Ronald now was about to take what is seldom withheld from accepted lovers ; he drew the apparently unwilling girl to his arms, and in the act of imprinting a warm kiss—for Sir Ronald's blood had really warmed—he was thrust rudely back by his brother, who stamping on his prostrate rival, vented his curses and his kicks in concert.

“It is done,” he said as he bestowed his last malediction, “may heaven hear my curses!—you have deprived me of the girl I loved ; you have, I am certain, swindled me of my just inheritance—you have blighted my youth—crushed my affection—made me a pauper—and, worse than all, an enemy ! days and nights may roll over your head—your family may prosper—you may revel in your riches ; but, by that God who hears me ! no time shall ever reconcile me to the basest of brothers, no soft words shall win me back to you—but I will follow your path, and cross it where I can ; and when most in security, you shall feel the scorpion sting which blighted hope alone can inflict!—Good bye, Margaret ! but not for ever ! you, poor, weak

thing! won by ambition—deceived by deceit—look at your husband—who is to be—on the ground! his brother's foot upon his neck!—and thus I dismiss you both!”

As he finished these quickly uttered words, he caught up his brother's purse, which hung from his waistcoat pocket, and rushing from both the ungrateful girl and still more ungenerous brother, he hastened to his apartment, and making the most portable package he could contrive, disappeared from Raven Castle.

No sooner had he left his brother, than Rawlinson arrived. He had seen it all,—he had witnessed the rude assault and the theft.—He had rightly calculated upon the hasty revenge of Albert; his joy was unbounded, he rubbed his hands in ecstasy; and lifting the prostrate Sir Ronald, he took his daughter's hand, and walked towards the castle.

CHAPTER IV.

No sooner had Sir Ronald recovered from the assault, than Rawlinson poured the tide of advice as to future conduct.

"We have him now, safe, de Lancy," he said; "his blood is too good to brook the taunts and revilings which are attached to one who has committed a theft. Margaret saw it, and she could witness against him. I will meet him now, and irritate him to depart. In the meantime," he continued, as he whispered in Sir Ronald's ear, "you can avail yourself of the moment to arrange your future marriage. Remember, it must be soon."

Rawlinson found his intentions useless.

Albert had taken flight. The disorder in which his room was left indicated the suddenness of his departure ; and from a paper found on the table, which contained only these words —“ Follow not the steps of a desperate man,” —it was imagined that he would not return to interrupt the ceremony of his brother’s marriage.

Sir Ronald was allowed but a few days to make his arrangements. Rawlinson undertook the settlements himself, being one of the trustees. A clause in these deeds enabled Margaret to will away a certain part, even from the children which might be born ; but this clause had been omitted during the time Rawlinson read over the deed previous to his signature. The poor dupe of this treacherous ally was desired to make preparations on a grand scale. It did not suit the intentions of Rawlinson for his daughter to be smuggled into Raven Castle. The whole county must witness the ceremony ; and there in the full face of all, should the ceremony be performed.

As the time grew shorter, Sir Ronald ap-

peared to grow more animated ; the natural austerity of his character seemed to give way before a lightness of heart which had long been a stranger to him. The fact was, that Sir Ronald considered himself secure ; and as not a word had been received concerning Albert, he concluded that, relieved of him for the present, Herbert for the future, Rawlinson satisfied, his daughter united, that henceforth the only interruption to his happiness might be the watchful interference of his father-in-law.

Many and many were the people invited to the nuptials ; and although many accepted the invitation, yet one family steadily refused—it was that of Mr. Molesworth. This worthy labourer in the vineyard of Christianity would not countenance a union which was in every way repugnant to his feelings of respect for the de Lancy family. Rawlinson had long been considered an unworthy member of society : and more than once he had been strongly suspected of dishonest dealings in parish matters by the worthy rector. Between them some words of a disagreeable tendency

had passed ; and although Mr. Molesworth, with the urbanity of manner which always distinguished him, saluted the attorney—for he quarrelled with no man—yet that salute was the only interchange of civilities between them.

The living Mr. Molesworth held was the gift of old Sir Ronald ; and so undisguisedly did he mention his disgust at the union, that he offered to relinquish his flock, his house, his peaceful abode, and retire upon the small fortune he had saved for his children, rather than be doomed to see Margaret Rawlinson united to a de Lancy.

His only son was about the age of Albert ; and until love weaned him from his friendship, Albert had been his constant companion. His youngest daughter, a girl of only seven years of age, had been christened, to meet the fancy of the old baronet, by the name of Ronald ; in fact, the families had been associated for years. But that association was at once destroyed when Margaret Rawlinson was declared to be the future bride of de Lancy ; and Albert

had fled from Raven Castle with the taint of theft upon his hands.

In spite of all objections—for objections only made Sir Ronald more determined, the day was fixed for the 23rd of December (1787). The ceremony was to be followed by the festivities of Christmas; and old Herbert, had he been there, might have believed that the nuptials of the young baronet would recall the good old days of revelry at that season, when the old year shakes hands with the new, and ungrateful man rings the same peal for the departed friend of 365 days, that he welcomes a new and uncertain period of his future existence, which may be fraught with all the ills and evils to which we are subject in this life. It is like the death of a king, when all his subjects go into compulsory mourning; and whilst the hearse and the nodding plumes, the pageantry, the useless folly of bedizening a coffin in which moulders and rots a poor piece of departed royalty, the sycophant, and all who crowd a court are, with smiles on their faces, and insincerity on their lips, lisping out,—“the

king is dead,"—"long live the king!"—so do we ring out the old year with joy, and ring in the new one with the same merry peal.

All of the sombre melancholy which distinguished Raven Castle was removed;—new furniture was supplied where the old had faded—a gorgeous display of plate, which had passed from father to son, and which yet weighed heavily in the scale of grandeur; new liveries were prepared, new equipages bought; and before the day fixed for the nuptials, the arms of the de Lancys, and those of the attorney, Rawlinson, were emblazoned on the panels of the carriage.

Rawlinson was not an inactive spectator of these preparations; he was now about to work out his masterpiece of plot. With a candour which quite astonished Sir Ronald, he asked him to whom he should confide the original will?

"Name any one," he said; "I will place it in his hands; and the hour after your marriage it shall be delivered to you."

"This confidence re-assures me, Rawlinson.

Our mutual safety will be secured by the marriage ; and the destruction of the proof against me will render me more happy."

" It is your evident increase of affection for my child, which makes me offer the deed without your request," replied Rawlinson ; " and did not common prudence warn me of the necessity of being careful, I would destroy it now."

" What ! do you fear my wavering in regard to my marriage ? the day is fixed—only two days from this ; all preparations are made—the company invited."

" Aye, but the ring is not on—the license is not bought—Margaret Rawlinson is not as yet Margaret de Lancy. We are told that all things are uncertain ; the mind of man ever wavers, Sir Ronald, and the prudent man never believes a deed complete until the signature and the seal are affixed. But my happiness in seeing my aim nearly completed almost has blinded me to a fact which has reached me—Herbert is alive !"

" Alive !" ejaculated Sir Ronald, " what an-

gel could have borne him up? There never yet was cattle or dog that toppled over the Raven cliff, and lived! And can an old infirm man, a man verging on a natural death, whose miserable limbs and joints could barely support the frame which tottered as he walked, tumble from that rugged point in the boiling well below, and be rescued? It cannot be, Rawlinson; you have, with a master hand, touched the strings, to see how inharmoniously they can jar, when the touch is not in unison with the mind."

"I tell you, he lives—and far from here. I have traced him by accident. A friend of mine, residing in Cornwall, mentions an old man who has come to reside with a brother, who speaks of his being unkindly discharged by Sir Ronald de Lancy. My fears made me suspect. I sent one down who knew him, and he lives!"

"What if he does? he knows nothing which can rise up against us. Bound together by this union—the deed destroyed—Albert gone—where, no one knows—all—all tends to

favour us. A few years will rid us of Herbert, and then, Rawlinson, we may revel in security."

"You are wrong about Herbert; but be assured he can injure us deeply. He was present at the re-marriage of your father, and at that time when busy babblers inquired why a re-marriage should take place—for men are generally satisfied with the parson's first blessing—old Herbert was heard to say that something must be wrong, or old Sir Ronald, the good and the just, would never thus attempt to cast a slur upon his lady, by making it requisite to have a new marriage. If you were married and the original will destroyed," continued Rawlinson, with a suspicious sneer, "you would not be in such a hurry to repair an illegality in the first proceeding; but would, I dare say, with most pious melancholy countenance, regret the evil, and separate yourself from it."

"You do me, perhaps, some injustice," replied Sir Ronald, evidently much hurt at the manner this imputation on his honour and ho-

nesty had been cast ; but he continued—" Human nature has ever been prone to attribute to others the same meanness which lurks in our own breast—this deed—this d——d deed—I will have placed in Mr. Molesworth's hands to be given me on the day of our marriage."

" With all my heart," replied Rawlinson ; " although I hate that fellow, for his over zealousness, yet I have no objection to his being the holder. The deed shall be sealed up, so that his old eye cannot penetrate the secret ; curiosity, you know, made Eve transgress, and man was easily persuaded to gratify the same desire ; but remember Molesworth remarried your father—do you think he never inquired the reason of this strange unusual transaction?"

" He knows nothing about it, for if he had," remarked Sir Ronald, " he would have given me a hint when he advised me not to tarnish the honour of our house by an alliance with yours "

Rawlinson bit his lip with vexation and remarked, " That viper I will yet scotch ! I had long since done it, but that the old man is so

meek and lowly in appearance—so apparently kind to the poor—and so reverently civil to his neighbour, that the clamour against the action would set all the crows and daws of the parish, with outstretched beaks, bellowing vengeance. My time will come.”

“What would you do,” asked Sir Ronald, “against one so honest, so respected? I tell you, Rawlinson, I would with pleasure strip myself of my vast possessions, if I could but change or decay away the upbraidings of conscience which for ever tear me to death—if by a sacrifice of property, I could obliterate the deeds; but I am placing a poisoned dagger in your hands with which I know full well you will hereafter wound me.”

“Beggars, Sir Ronald, always say they would give the whole world for a thing they covet;—it is easy to offer what is not beggars’ to give. So you may say as to the splendid offering of your wealth. I could save you the trouble of the gift; but that I require some of it myself. But to a subject nearest both our hearts, the marriage. The settlements are here—

my daughter waits—my clerk is in attendance—let us no longer trifle away time—I will call them in—and we can sign and seal.”

“Let me run my eye over the deed,” said Sir Ronald.

“Have you not heard it read by me,” interrupted Rawlinson, “do you suspect me of wishing to alienate the wealth of another?—am I in borrowed plumage?—can any one pluck me of my golden feathers and leave me a naked creature unable to live—and unable to fly?—I’ll ring this bell with your permission, Sir Ronald.”

The bell was rung, the servant told to summon the party—and the settlements were signed. Rawlinson was the trustee for his daughter, and young Molesworth, then about twenty-two years of age, was nominated for Sir Ronald. The attorney, with accustomed precision folded up the document—some red tape was wound round it—the whole was delivered to the clerk—and all but Rawlinson, his daughter and Sir Ronald had departed.

“Then to-morrow,” said Sir Ronald, “Mar-

garet, I shall claim you as a bride! Tell me, my love, have you prepared every thing you wish removed? Your bridesmaids, are they summoned? and now I think of it, Margaret, in all our conversations about this important step in both our lives, you have never mentioned the names of those fair ladies who are to stand near you at the marriage—nay, do not blush so? there surely is no impropriety in the question; and I would not for the world call up the blood upon your cheek to testify an incivility on my part.”

“Heavens help us!” said Rawlinson as he rose to depart. “I fancy the Baronet, Margaret, has cast aside his books of deep learning, and has been busy with the art of love. I will leave you for the present. Indeed, I shall not be wanted again until to-morrow. The license is prepared. Sir Ronald’s gallantry has not forgotten the ring, and to-morrow, Margaret, I shall congratulate you as Lady de Lancy.”

“You dine here to-day, Rawlinson,” said Sir Ronald. “I expect the clergyman and some of our distant country friends to dinner;

and some accident might render it requisite to delay their departure, in which case, when I am gone, you must do the honours of the house. You must, therefore, be made acquainted with them—I shall expect you?”

“It is inconvenient, Sir Ronald,—I had wished to have spent the last evening with my favourite Margaret. I hardly like to part with such a treasure now; but as it conduces to your happiness, my daughter, and will I trust increase your’s, Sir Ronald, I must give up all personal gratification to forward the happiness of both. But I cannot dine with you to-day. At the breakfast, to-morrow, you can introduce me; and accustomed to the world and its ways I shall not be long in making myself mighty agreeable—good morning.”

“Is it not a general practice, my dear girl,” said Sir Ronald, “for the bridegroom to make some small presents to the bridesmaids? The time is short, I own, for the commission; but I think it can be managed. What think you, dearest?”

“Your liberality is so great, Sir Ronald,

that I could not trespass upon it. Presents are not unfrequently made; and it is true my bridesmaids, who are not in very affluent circumstances."

"The more reason why the good custom should not be abandoned. How proud I shall be, Margaret, when to-morrow I see you dressed in your bridal attire;—that beautiful figure doing ample justice to the milliner's art—this rosy lip, which love invites to kiss (nay, dearest Margaret, it is an accepted lover's privilege; do not withdraw from me as if I were a viper—and faith I will ascertain your forgiveness, by stealing another) lipping out the words that you will be mine, until death us do part. Then shall I feel a joy to which I have long been a stranger, and find my life worth preserving, since I am to share the blessing of yours. I have the wedding ring here, Margaret; let me see how it will look, with this guard—nay, now this is unkind. How can I tell if it will fit you, if you refuse me the trial of its exactness."

After some little struggling, and some small

persuasion, the coy damsel allowed the amorous baronet to fit the ring, and then to kiss the hand which graced it; and here in this intoxicating moment of love Sir Ronald's heart was lightened of its load, and pleasure sparkled in his eye. The intellectual countenance of the baronet, lit up as it were by the torch of love and pleasure, appeared handsome in the eyes of Margaret. She looked upon him with tenderness, and even forgot her own meanness in the moment of love.

The arrival of the clergyman was a hint to Margaret to withdraw. She retraced her steps through the shrubbery, had already passed the bower in which the declaration was made, and was hurrying onwards towards the small gate which led to her father's house, when, on passing one of the many turnings which intervened, her progress was arrested by a man whose face was carefully concealed, and who, in the darkness of the evening—for it was five o'clock, and in December,—stood before her as a stranger. At first Margaret believed herself accidentally met by one of the visitors at the

castle, who had been invited to the wedding. She bowed and endeavoured to pass, but she felt herself withheld.

“Unhand me, Sir,” she said, “or I shall request Sir Ronald to resent this imprudence.”

“Hear me, Margaret,” said Albert, as he cast aside his disguise: “this cold evening—this threatening lowering weather will keep my brother from venturing beyond his house. I have returned to see you for the last time, to hear from your own lips your consent to this marriage. Be not afraid, Margaret; I love you too sincerely to harm you; you once taught me to love you, when, arm in arm through these dark shrubberies, we talked of days reserved for us in happiness, and when I, believing the words which came from your lips in apparent sincerity, imagined that one day Margaret Rawlinson would be my bride. For days I have been concealed. I heard that to-morrow was the day fixed to crush my hopes. I come for a confirmation of the event, and then farewell for ever! I will never intrude my

downcast countenance to mar your pleasure, or ever by my presence rebuke you for your inconstancy. Is it true, Margaret? If you can, for heaven's sake deny the libel on a woman's character, and stand before me the angel I have ever believed you!"

"Why cannot you," said Margaret, "return to the castle? All that is passed will be forgotten. I will contribute to cheer your life. A liberal allowance shall be made to you; your brother shall be reconciled to you."

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Albert, "you do but evade an answer which you dare not give. Tell me, Margaret, were you not, as far as words and promises bind us in the world, mine?"

"I was, Albert; I confess it. But my father would not listen to so imprudent a match. On what could we subsist? Besides, your youth and inexperience were insuperable objections; and when I urged him to consent, he answered, 'Albert is a nice boy, but boys make bad husbands.'"

"And you, yielding to your father's opinion,

sacrificed your affection for me, and consented to marry my brother?"

"I did," replied Margaret, firmly.

"And you will not feel depressed in spirits when you know that your conduct has influenced mine. From this moment, I tear myself away! But, as I live, the unnatural brother who has deprived me of my love, and the unfeeling woman who has sacrificed it, shall find in Albert de Lancy a never sleeping enemy! Love, when neglected, we are told, turns to bitter hatred; and though at intervals I am aware your figure will rise before me, and the many happy moments we have spent be recalled with fondness to my memory, yet will I banish them with a curse, or remember them only to increase my bitterness."

"You talk wildly, Albert. Have I done wrong to follow a parent's injunctions?"

"Shall I do wrong, if I follow the dictates of nature?"

"It is unnatural to harbour hatred against a brother and a sister."

“ Is revenge unnatural ? Is it not implanted in our nature ? ”

“ Are we not taught to forgive our enemies ? ”

“ Is it not said, ‘ an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth ? ’ ”

“ Is it not written, ‘ do good to them which despitefully use you ? ’ ”

“ Can you, Margaret, hope, by this quotation of Scripture, to silence the throbbings of my heart ? I loved you—I love you—beyond all love ! When I was ill-treated, I came to you, and your fondness healed the wound ; when scoffed and despised, you listened, and you comforted me ; when all around appeared to hate me, you alone professed to love me. Did I do wrong in loving her who thus assuaged my misfortunes ? Could I believe her otherwise than a guardian angel ? And when I thought my future life should be shared with her, can I help feeling a revenge within me, when I see the only being the earth contained, on whom I founded a hope of happiness, torn from me—not by one on whom I could have

wreaked a summary vengeance—not by a stranger smitten with her charms—but by a brother, one who told me to have more pride than to marry the daughter of an attorney, and then marries her himself!”

“It is useless, Albert, thus to continue. I know you loved me, and I feel it; but the die is cast, and I must abide the throw. I cannot retract when the ring is placed on my finger. Even now the clergyman who is to unite us is under your brother’s roof; from the distant parts of the county those friends who are to honour us by their company are arrived. I should, by changing my mind, entail a ridicule for ever upon your family. Besides, Albert, if reason could guide you now, how soon might your prospects appear to brighten. I could persuade your brother to forward your views—to place you in a proper position in life. Whereas, if I married you, I should place a mill-stone round your neck, which would, however much you might struggle, sink you to the bottom. Be advised; appear to-morrow at the wedding—wear a cheerful countenance.

Forgive me for having violated my word to you, and I will prove how sincerely I love you, by the good I will effect in your situation in life."

"Hear me, Margaret—listen to me, as I kneel at your feet! I have, in poverty, it is true, offered you my hand, and you have accepted it. Tell me, before I go distracted, can no persuasion induce you to fly with me? Nay, Margaret, do not start so! Your father will be reconciled, when it will be useless to continue an opposition. Nature will move the heart towards a daughter; and trust me, you will be happier with one who loves you, than in the wavering disposition of a man, who one moment will caress, the next despise you. This moment, Margaret,—now—let us fly—and——"

"Never!" interrupted the girl, "never, Albert; my mind is irrevocably fixed upon the marriage, and to-morrow I shall be your sister."

"Never will I believe it, Margaret, until I see it! and even then, shall doubt my eyes

and my ears. Once again, let me persuade you, entreat you."

"It is useless—I must retire. The wind is piercing cold, and my father awaits me. Hark! there is six striking; it will be difficult to frame an excuse for this unusual absence.—Good night."

"Not thus, Margaret, must we part! I have known you long, cherished you fondly. Not even now, when I feel the devil rising in my breast, can I consent to such a cold and formal salutation. Here is a ring, Margaret,—it was my mother's. I was young when she died; but I remember her last injunction was to preserve it carefully, as it might one day serve me. Oh, that the spirit of her who reared me in all tenderness would come from her resting place on high, to move you in accordance with my wishes! Take it, Margaret, for my sake; wear it, and be as bright an ornament to your sex as was my poor dear mother! And surely, Margaret, you might bestow upon me one kiss—the last I shall ever covet. Come, dearest girl, let us part in all

fondness—with all kindness one towards another.”

“I cannot, Albert, I cannot,” replied the girl, and breaking from him, neither accepted the ring, nor gave the parting kiss.

“She is gone!” said Albert, as he watched the object he once so much loved; “gone!—without even one parting press of that hand I have so often held in mine—no last word of tenderness or of hope—but a kind of sullen determination for ever to forget me! And I must bear it all; here in these cold shrubberies must I walk, like an unquiet spirit, to quiet my own heart; for here how often have I walked with her! This bower I reared because she one day spoke of the jessamine as a favorite flower, calling it a bright star in the bosom of the night, and likening it to the modern lady, who shines most when evening throws a darkness over all! I could root it up for vengeance sake, but that the changing disposition of her heart, perhaps, would never miss it. Now could I but find old Herbert, and make him the sole depository of my plan,

I should feel more at ease. But he was missing in a strange manner; and yet who could accuse my brother? I am unfit for reason, and could better herd with men as mad as myself. Aye, the bell again—the summons to the table; there will be joy and revelry—speeches from the lip, and not from the heart—words of welcome—the place which I should fill, filled by a stranger; and when, perhaps, some one of the company who may have known me in happier days, should inquire of me, the answer will be warm and affectionate! there will be regret at my absence, whilst the devil would be more welcome at that board than myself! Of all life's miseries, excepting the continual blotting out of one's friends from the book of life, and the fear of being the last to linger in solitude, there is none greater than that of brooding over misfortunes, occasioned by the kindness of one's family—those are the real restless creatures who kindly manage every one's concerns but their own, and tell you that love is well to amuse youth, but that discretion and prudence are the children of age and expe-

rience. I will see this wedding, and then I will plunge headlong into the world, and leave chance to extricate me. And now to enquire concerning Herbert."

CHAPTER V.

THE morning broke darkly; the weather was windy, murky, rainy. Sir Ronald rose from his bed but half satisfied with the restless slumber he had stolen. This day was to seal his fate—either to be the man of large fortune, wedded to the daughter of his bitterest foe, or to fall from his high estate, and allow the brother he had so shamefully spurned to fill his proper chair! The company arrived—a breakfast was prepared; there seemed joy and contentment on every face. Even Sir Ronald's fixed, determined countenance relaxed a little of its severity; and he occasionally ventured a joke, which, however well imagined, seemed in his deep hollow voice, like the jest of a condemned criminal before execution.

Amongst this party was young Molesworth ; the father, although he refused to countenance the match, did not prevent his son from enjoying the day's entertainment. Besides, he had ever been the friend of Albert, and was now Sir Ronald's trustee. Some days had elapsed since Molesworth and Albert had met, and he was the more anxious to see him, to glean from him some account of this extraordinary alliance which the elder brother was about to make. A succession of company arrived—but there was no Albert.

At last, bedizened in all the nonsense of the bridal dress, appeared Margaret and her father. With the bride came two bridesmaids, one fairer than the bride in face and form, whose large blue eyes were brightened with astonishment at the splendour of the scene around her. She was a friend of Margaret Rawlinson, who had resided in Cornwall for some years. Young she was, for fifteen years had hardly passed over her ; yet being a plant of quick growth, had early become a woman. She alone was

the sole depository of Margaret's heart; they had, when young, been much together, and there grew up between them a more than feminine friendship.

They were, in all respects, different : Laura Mackenzie was all heart, sincerity, affection; Margaret was cold, calculating, reserved; Margaret was a dark beauty, with a peculiarly well-shaped profile; the other was a smiling Hebe, better seen in front. There was a playful good-humour on her lips, whilst on those of Margaret there was a compressed kind of determination. Laura had the pouting lip of kindness and benevolence, the other the thin expression of care and reserve. Sir Ronald started when he was introduced to her; but the flush which covered his sallow countenance soon passed away, and he appeared formal in his manner; he welcomed her, however, warmly.

The clergyman was the first to suggest, that if all were present who were expected, it were better to proceed with the ceremony. There

was at this time an awful change over the features of Sir Ronald; his sallowness became horribly deeper, whilst on the ruddy face of Rawlinson there was an air of pride and satisfaction no one could mistake. He led his daughter by the hand. She had never lifted her veil; and if at that moment some pang of regret was manifested by the tear in her eye, no one could discern it. Perhaps at that moment she viewed, with a natural horror, the man to whom she was about to be married; for depraved and hardened must that heart be, which failed to feel some remorse at the misery it had occasioned another.

Margaret was neither blind nor foolish; she was well aware that no affection prompted her to this alliance. It was the ambition of her father which had instilled the feeling of pride in her heart; the magnificence which was to be hers had overcome the love which, in spite of herself, still lurked about in favour of Albert. She walked to the altar firmly; but her companion, the meek and lovely Laura, trembled visibly. To her, this service was not one

of little moment; she considered it an awful step in a woman's life, and as her eyes scanned the gorgeous scene around her, she thought that happiness and contentment required not all the meretricious decorations which seemed like gilding a sepulchre; for when she looked at the moving anatomy, Sir Ronald, it was hard indeed for even fancy to dress him as a bridegroom, and to render him an idol worthy of love.

The previous arrangements, such as placing the bridegroom and the bride, being completed, the clergyman began the ceremony. The church, in which it was to be performed, was larger than is generally under the roof of the largest mansions. It had a gallery, supported by large pillars. There was likewise an organ of some value. Around the walls were tablets on which the lapidary had deeply engraven the virtues of the de Lancy family; over each was the achievement, which had been placed on the house to warn the passer by that a great person was no more. Foolish pride! for if one were really good, the doleful news would

reach the farthest friend without this decoration of woe; and if bad, the sooner the earth covers over him who has disgraced his being, and left behind him the worst example, the better. A total oblivion is preferable, than showing vice to have been blessed with riches and luxuries.

In the chapel there might have been about forty persons. The household servants, (all of whom had long resided in the family, and were now about to be changed, for Lady de Lancy disliked all servants who might have known too much) were present; but there seemed no intruders.

The clergyman had proceeded to the part—"Let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace,"—when the voice of Albert was heard, as he came from behind one of the pillars, and said:

"I forbid these banns!"

It was uttered not in haste or in anger, but in a slow determined voice.

The clergyman instantly stopped; but Rawlinson advanced and whispered that poor Al-

bert was subject to slight insanity, and had believed that his daughter was in love with him. "Allow him," he continued, "to pass unnoticed, and proceed. There can be no objection to the union. I am her father; Sir Ronald, you know, is unmarried."

Sir Ronald looked round with a glance of reproach, but said not a word; whilst Laura, astonished at the interruption, raised her veil, and looked at Albert. Their eyes met; there was in Laura's the expression of pity. She had been told by Margaret that she anticipated this interruption, for that Albert had not left the neighbourhood. That look of Laura silenced at once the reproach Albert had destined for his brother. He stood, as it were, bewildered; whilst the clergyman, satisfied of the words of Rawlinson, for they were conclusive, continued the ceremony.

The ring was given—the marriage complete. The daughter of Rawlinson was the wife of the proud Ronald de Lancy. The cheers of the tenantry, who were regaled with unusual profusion, resounded through the church. The

whole company had departed ; but Albert remained. Slowly and cautiously, when all had retired, he advanced to the spot on which his brother had knelt, and there, with uplifted hands and maniac mind, he swore to be revenged upon him who had blighted his hopes for ever ! And yet, in all his worst imprecations, he called upon heaven to bless her who had thus deserted him ! Rising from the cushion on which he had knelt, he kissed the altar, and said aloud :

“ I go, just heaven, to keep my vow ! ”

He turned to depart, but was interrupted by Laura.

“ This is no place,” she began, “ to tell the purport of my coming ; pass but the door, and I will be a faithful messenger.”

Fascinated by the voice—the meek and humble voice of Laura—Albert retired from the church towards the room in which the company were assembled. He stopped, however, directly he heard the sound of voices, and Laura began,

“ I come, Mr. de Lancy, from Lady de Lancy, to request you will forget the past, and join in the gaiety around us. She has made me acquainted with all the circumstances. Your brother is softened ; for he could not refuse the first request of his bride ; and he promises you a sincere and affectionate welcome, and to forward you in any path of life you may select.”

“ I cannot, fair young lady, accept even from your lips the reconciliation they have offered. They could not have selected one whose angel features were more likely to succeed. But on that altar from which you saw me arise, I have sworn an oath from which no time shall ever absolve me. The die is cast, and I must abide the throw. My brother has been a serpent in my path ; he has stung me, as I folded him to my breast, at the very moment when he pretended to have overcome his dislike to solitude ; and even to me—he was preparing for me, whilst presenting to my lips the chalice of intoxicating pleasure, the bitterest

dregs of misery. I have drank it—I have drained it of its last drop! But vengeance shall be mine! I swear——”

“Stop, Sir,” said Laura, her eye kindling with animation, “let me not hear your oath, I came as the messenger of peace; surely you have more kindness than to wish me to return the harbinger of discord. Margaret has requested you to consider that now her marriage is celebrated, that she urges you not by former affection, which she must forget, but by a sister’s claim, to relinquish all that useless passion which renders her miserable, and must leave you in poverty.”

“Tell her, fair lady, for as yet I am unacquainted with your name;”—“It is Laura Mackenzie,” she interrupted—“That I forgive her,—I bear no enmity against her; her happiness and welfare I have prayed for, and yet I own I have neutralized the prayer by my vow against my brother. Tell her that I go from this moment an outcast from my proper home to seek some employment; that I scorn to be beholden to my brother for a penny.

And do you be an ambassador in my behalf and return to Sir Ronald this purse, which, in the frenzy of the moment, I snatched from his hand. The world is wide, Miss Mackenzie ; chance may throw me again in your path ; and then as now I shall thank you warmly for your kind interest in me, and bless that mild and angel countenance, that has almost won me from my oath."

" If you were sincere in your words, Sir, you would relinquish a vow made in haste and contrary to your religion ;—I am but young, Mr. de Lancy, and perhaps, forward and impertinent ; but my mother taught me, that forgiveness of trespasses against ourselves constituted the greatest part of christian charity."

" Your mother instructed a heart of different mould from that of Lady de Lancy's. Go to that company whose cheer of happiness strike me almost to the earth. Contribute to their enjoyment, by showing that face beaming with youth, and loveliness, and happiness ; and may He who rules and disposes all hearts, keep

yours from the weight of misery and anguish, which weighs down mine! You do not despise me, I hope, nor will consider this respectful behaviour as other than the expression of my thanks."

"But once more let me beg of you to consider;—let me,"—said the smiling girl, "join my influence, if I possess any, to that of Margaret's,—stay, Sir, with your family, and your friends."

"I am trodden upon," he replied with some vehemence, "by my family; and for my friends," he added with a bitterness, that would have done credit to his brother's satanic mind,—“I leave them my character to uphold! Good bye, Miss Mackenzie—I shall be happier working for my livelihood, than in idleness, and in luxury. Wherever I go, I shall remember your kind action."

He again took her hand, and as he kissed it with respect, he raised his eyes, and saw the large tear start from her eye lid, and course down her face, as if sensible she had betrayed a feeling for de Lancy, which her modesty

forbade. She quickly withdrew her hand, and not trusting herself to speak, she hurried from the room, to join the marriage breakfast, and to deliver the last determination of Albert.

Albert watched her to the door, and listened to her retreating footsteps. The second door had closed; he looked round the apartment for the last time, as if searching for something, which should for ever remind him of his home, and opening a drawer of a circular table, he took a diminutive old book, passed through the church, and with the small sum of five shillings, began life in reality.

In the meantime, the bride had retired to change her dress; the breakfast was spread, and the father-in-law, who had usurped the seat of Albert, sat at the head of the table, whilst the bridegroom was making some preparation for departure.

When Sir Ronald returned, and the bride came to take her farewell kiss of her father, and receive the gratulations of the company, dignified as friends, young Molesworth stepped up,

and putting a large kind of letter in Sir Ronald's hand said " I deliver up my trust to you, for there is no doubt of your marriage."

The carriage drove off, and the happy pair retired to an estate in Dorsetshire.

CHAPTER VI.

WITH an aching heart, Albert left Raven Castle, and inwardly vowed he would never return, unless as its owner. "I will come back," he said to himself, "often to mar his prospects ; I will be near him, when he least expects it ; for if Laura is there, I can gratify two of the best feelings in our nature, love and revenge."

He wandered along the high road, in mind a gentleman, but a beggar in reality. Whither he bent his steps, seemed quite immaterial ; the world was all before him ; hope cheered him on ; behind him, was all he hated, and his

heart grew lighter, as he increased his distance from his brother.

Fatigue overcame him, he had walked long and fast, and nature gave him the first hint that his mind was too active for his body. He sat himself down by a gate, and in spite of the season of the year, fell asleep, and slept soundly. At night, he found a bed for a small sum ; and there, released from the painful surveillance, to which he had been subjected, he pondered over his future prospects. His first idea was to find some situation, for which he was perfectly eligible, in any office, either under government or in some private house. He felt certain that the gentleman would be seen in the manners, more than in the coat ; and as in youth all difficulties seem easily dispelled, so Albert de Lancy saw only the brightness of futurity, and never once thought of all the miseries to be overcome, before he could mount into affluence.

The morning brought with it some few hints that no time was to be lost ; his fortune had dwindled away more than half ; and the next

morning would see him reduced to beggary. He was far from London, that best mart for talent of any description ; and he found his best means of getting there, was to embark on board of some coaster. There he had an uncle, who certainly would not allow him to starve ; and from his purse, he calculated, he should be able to remunerate the captain, who would grant him a passage.

He had now reached Newport, in Wales, a sea-port, of not very large dimensions, and washed by St. George's channel ;—with a reckless disregard to his appearance, he walked into a house, where several low characters were seated, singing and smoking ; and amongst these he seated himself. That day he had eaten scarcely enough, to sustain him through his fatigue ; and with a kind of despair, for he knew it would leave him without a penny, he ordered some supper, and at the same time, called for some porter.

Although Albert's dress, was none the better for the wear and tear of the last two days, yet amongst those with whom he now congregated,

he looked like a prince. There were three or four, of the lowest of the low ; who having been gambling for their few pence, were now benefiting the winner, who, with a generosity, very common in low life, spent that for which he had risked his own money, to drown for a moment in oblivion the knowledge of absolute poverty, with which the losers were at this time cursed.

Here Albert first heard the low conversation, the utter disregard of decency, the cursing, and swearing, of those who toil through life for a small pittance, who are wanting in prudence, and neglect to save a farthing. By the side of this group, were three or four seafaring men. It was difficult for Albert, to satisfy his mind, whether these were men of wars-men, or seamen on leave from a merchant brig, which he had observed in the roadstead ; but their conversation was at any rate more to the taste of Albert, than the constant drunken exclamations of the ragamuffin crew, who were now gloriously intoxicated, and who allowed the pipes to fall from their mouths, the lips of the brutes being unable to retain them.

And the enemy's near,
We look at the flag which waves over our head ;
Then we cheerfully sing
For our country and King,
And the tear which we drop, is the tear for the dead !
" What's the use of repining, our life's but a dream,
Yet the sunshine of hope through all sorrows may gleam ;
With the heart of true seamen we'll buffet the waves,
And free as the breeze—for no sailors are slaves !
O'er the ocean we'll roam,
For the sea is our home,
And Poll shall rejoice when we come back again ;
Then the grog shall go round,
And contentment be found,
For employment of time ever banishes pain !"

" Aye Tom, that's all true enough," remarked one of the men. " I believe I'll not go to see my wife and child ; once afloat, and what with the ship's duty, and as you say, some employment to keep the devil out of our minds, who are so happy as we sailors ? I beg your pardon, Sir," continued this man, who in the absence of his officer was the leader of the gang, " but I hope we don't disturb you by our singing ?"

"Not in the least, Sir" said Albert; "on the contrary, your song has done me much service; for I felt very heavy of heart, and I believe that employment will make me more happy."

"Why don't you go to sea, Sir," said Tom, "there you'll hear singing, with all manners of *airs*, from the light breeze to the heavy gale; the wind always sings a bit; and as for money, if you want that, why you borrow it from the first Frenchman who crosses your hawse; and when you get it like a man, why you spend it like a man; you don't clap it in your pocket like a miser, but you make your friends happy, as we are now.—Come, Sir, join us now in a glass; here's the money, I'll stand treat."

At this moment, a rough looking man, well wrapped up in a large great coat, with a tarpaulin hat on his head, came in.

"Come lads," he began, "its time to be moving; the boat is on shore. What have we here?"

"They are fish, Sir, for our net," replied Tom; "they were more than we could manage at first, so I told Bill Haliday to go and black

his face, and play pitch halfpenny with them, he's a regular good one at that, and he soon won all their money; he then gets them in here, and makes them drunk, and there they are like so many casks, ready for shipping, and Bill as drunk as any of them."

"This is a good haul indeed! Well done, Tom, you are the boy for inventions. Come, hand them off to the boat; take them on board, and come ashore again for me, I'll wait here for you."

"Here's a gentleman, Sir," said Tom, "who is kind enough to join us in a glass of grog. He wants employment, he says;" and then, whispering to his officer, Tom added: "He looks so precious like a young lawyer, that I was afraid to take him at once; but if you keep him at work a little, we'll do him nice enough."

"Look sharp on board, and bear a hand back again; I want to get to sea to-night; the wind is fair down the channel."

Albert saw the drunken men taken away, without their being able to make the slightest

resistance, and began to think that old Tom's song was not exactly true, at least that line which sounded so well when it was sung—

“ And free as the breeze, for no sailors are slaves.”

And yet, knowing so little of the world, he never suspected that he was, in all probability, to be the next man pressed into his majesty's service. His appearance had as yet protected him ; but the officer soon gleaned enough to satisfy himself he would not require much coaxing, to make him take the bounty and volunteer.

“ Aye,” said the midshipman, “ you have a long way to go, to get to London, and not much money to pay your way ; and when you get there, you will only begin some miserable life. Why don't you be a sailor ? you will soon have your pockets filled, and then you'll come back again a happy man. What do you say ? Come on board with me to-night ; and if you don't like it, why I can land you again at sunrise. It's much better than sleeping in this dirty house,”

“ I have no objection,” said Albert.

“Of course not,” said the midshipman; “why you’ll be made secretary to the captain, and instructor-general to the lieutenants. Here, landlord, what does this gentleman owe? Here’s the money. Take my arm, Sir; you seem tired. That’s all right; here’s the boat; mind how you step in. Tom, hand the gentleman aft, and take him on board, and bear a hand on shore again. Tell the cook to get the supper ready, and show the gentleman to his bed.”

The boat pushed off, and in a very few minutes she was alongside of a small sloop. Albert was handed out, not quite so respectfully as he was ushered in. The main hatch was taken off; and as he declined civilly to go down, preferring to wait on deck till the officer’s return, he was told to do as he was ordered, was shoved down, and found himself amongst the drunken beggars who had so recently been shipped.

Quite in vain was all his resistance; he was fairly entrapped; and he was quite wise enough to know that the drunken brutes by whom he

was surrounded were unable, even if they were willing, to resent the injury done to a de Lancy. Fatigued by the day's walk, he crept away into a corner; and having bitterly regretted his folly in leaving his brother's house, he resolved vengeance, allowed all his gentlemanly blood to boil over, and fell asleep.

His slumbers were not of long duration. The press-gang brought back one or two sober men, who had most gloriously fought for their liberty, but who were ultimately worsted, and forced on board. These men, having found themselves in security from which they could not escape, began to laugh at their situation, and cheered each other up by saying, "Perhaps it was all for the best, and they would show they yet retained their freedom of voice by singing songs." This they did with lusty lungs; whilst in the intervals Albert heard the seamen on deck getting the vessel under weigh. Before half an hour had elapsed, every one of the pressed men were attacked by that universal enemy, sea-sickness.

A night of greater misery Albert never passed, although, as will be seen hereafter, his life was one of strange vicissitudes. Nothing prostrates mind and body more than sea-sickness; the hero and the coward alike succumb, without either resistance or flight; and all the joys of life, be they in prospective or in the memory of the past, seem banished for a season.

About eight o'clock next morning the pressed men were brought on deck, two or three at a time. They were asked if they preferred to volunteer, but all refused, excepting Albert. He asked, if he refused, if he must be sent down to that hole again? On being answered in the affirmative, he said he would enter, and accordingly they proceeded to make a sailor of him.

The name he gave was Albert Mortimer, for the pride of family still held] a place in his heart. His coat tails were docked; opposite his name on the book was placed the word volunteer;—and Mortimer, from all the luxury he might have enjoyed in Raven Castle, consented, rather than return to the brother who had ill-used him, and the sister-in-law who had de-

ceived him, to face all the perils of the sea, and all the miseries of a foremost man.

But the mind of him who has received some education does not so easily fall. He was still a gentleman ; and it was merely the folly of despair which made him enter into service—little knowing the difficulty he would experience in obtaining his discharge.

For some days the Arrow (for that was the cutter's name) beat about against variable winds, during which time the sea-sickness had taken its leave, and Mortimer joined the crew of an evening, and listened with some delight to the daring exploits which these seamen had witnessed.

“ I'll tell you,” said Tom, who was by far the most expert at enticing novices to enter the service, “ there's nothing in the universal world half so good as a fine yard-arm to yard-arm fight. It is then the real British blood is seen ; the thicker the smoke, the heavier the fire, the lighter becomes the sailor's heart. It's all true that we feel a little queer when we stand to our quarters, as we are ranging up

alongside. But only let the first shot be fired from the bow gun, and all along the main deck every man stands ready at his quarters; he does not care a straw if both his arms are turned into French telegraphs, or if his legs are shot off and his carcase given to Davy Jones! He thinks no more of his life than the mast-head man aloft thinks of the lower deck holy-stone; and when it begins, why then each man cheers his neighbour. The flag of Old England waves proudly from the peak, and in twenty minutes down comes the tri-coloured rag. I'll just tell of one action. It will make your heart jump, Mortimer; and you'll love the life you have chosen."

CHAPTER VII.

"COME sit down here, my lads," said Tom, "while I twist you this yarn ;—before eight and forty hours are over our heads, some of the new ones below will be watched and quartered, and may be have experienced the like of what I am going to relate. I tell you, lads, whenever it shall come to pass, that old sailors give up Saturday nights, and sing no more songs, or spin no more yarns, then we shall lose our superiority on the seas,—and some other nation will hoist another broom at the mast heads of its ships, as the Dutchmen did before we walked off with it ; and we shall be swept up as clean as the quarter deck at seven bells ; but we shall never live to see that day, so I won't get melancholy by thinking of it.

“ Well, lads, its sometime back ; for it was in 1799 that I belonged to a frigate, on the East Indian station, called the Sibylle,—she had been built in France, and was no doubt intended to do much mischief to our trade, but she happened in 1794 to get too near to the old Romney, and they did not part company as enemies.—Bless your hearts, the Sibylle became an English frigate, before the crew had time to rig themselves out in their best toggery, in order to answer to their names, on board of their new ship. Well, there she was, a prize, brought into the service with her proper name, for they did not rechristen her ; when they changed the god-father, Edward Cooke commanded her, and we went to the East Indies, where, at that time, a Frenchman of the name of Saucy or Sercy, as they mis-spelt it, had the imprudence to be sailing about those seas, with an admiral’s flag flying,—aye and many’s the Indiaman he walked off with ; but somehow or other, we never could find how.

“ Well, amongst the French squadron, was a ship called “ a Forte,” she measured 1400 tons,

mounted fifty two guns in all, as complement to her battery. This ship was always at some nonsense or another, she was here, there, and every where, and her captain was as well named as his ship, they called him Captain Bowl-along (Beaulieu C. Long) and, sure enough, he got that battery of his under weight and bowled along gallantly.

“This ship was big enough to have stowed the Sibylle away upon her booms, we were only 1091 tons, though we mounted 48 guns, and had only 297 men and boys, and when an officer of the Forte who commanded a cartel, came on board of us, and heard we were going out to look after his ship, he hummed a song, as we shewed him round the ship. He said something about “*mangy and ale*,” to which our purser steward, who knew about as much of French as a Spanish tortoise does of the Spanish language, said was, *mangé sans ail*, or that he would eat us without garlick. Well, says Cooke, never mind, I’m just the cook that can dress the onion any way I like, and I’ll warm it, in a precious stew.

“ Out we went to sea from Madras roads, on the 19th of February, every man and boy on board of us, being as well convinced that we should muster short of a messmate, before we returned back again to shew our colours to Fort St. George, as that we were steering for the sand heads, at the mouth of the Bengal River. There we expected to find this floating Forte; for she had made sad havoc amongst the Indiamen, and generally kept somewhere in their track,—aye, every Saturday night we got together forward, at least some of us old ones, and we sung the youngsters a song, and told them what they might expect, which was some hard blows, but a certain prize, a lopped off fin and Greenwich hospital. Then the young ones used to crowd around us, and every blessed one of them cocked up their ears like the mate of the deck, when its ‘grog ahoy.’—I tell you, lads, these yarns keep up the pluck of the navy; what is it but the history of the service told by an eye-witness? But to be sure eye-witnesses do sometimes tell precious long stories.

“ On the evening of the 28th of February—it's not very likely I should forget that day of the month—the wind was light from the S. S. W. and the night preciously dark ; we were on the starboard tack, standing under easy sail, close hauled, looking up of course S. E. when the lookout man on the weather quarter reported some flashes, which although they looked like lightning, where somehow too short for that, and he thought it was just as well for him to report it, as to get his back scratched on Thursday, for keeping a bad look out.

“ The flashes bore about N. W. and the officer of the watch remarked, they always came exactly from the same point, and were always of the same kind ; well, before he reports this to the captain, for it was only half past eight, and the mate of the watch was mustering us by the binnacle light, he asks the first lieutenant, Mr. Lucius Hardyman, what he thinks of it, and says Hardyman, I think we might as well go and see if its lightning or not ; so down goes the officer of the watch, and mentions it to the captain, —he comes up with a night glass as thick

round, as the mizen topmast, and as short as its fid, and he looks round and round, every thing being upside down, but he sees no mast head tumbling up to the skies ; but still the flashes go on, until nine o'clock when all of a sudden they stop.

“ ‘ The lightning is come to an anchor,’ said the look out man, just loud enough to be over heard, ‘ I’m blessed if they weren’t all guns.’ ”

“ ‘ Tack ship, Mr. Hardyman, with the hands ; put out every light ; stow the hammock, and beat to quarters,—round came the saucy Sibylle on the larboard tack, and we edged away about W. N. W. when at 9. 30 we saw three large ships bearing S. E.

“ That’s Captain Bowl-along, said some of us, first of all, he is bearing N. W. and then in half an hour, or an hour, he bears S. E. but we are after you, my hearty, we’ll see what you’re made of, and so we made a little more sail, passed about two miles to leeward of them, then stood on till we could weather them, then round about again on the starboard tack,—in top gallant sails,—up courses, and hurrah for

the centre ship, which was on our lee-bow, and shewed a light from her stern, and which we were pretty certain from her size, was the Frenchman after all.

“ Well, the breeze was light, the waters smooth, the enemy not at all disposed to run away, the fight certain, and the Sibylle under her topsails jib and spanker, going two knots and a half, was creeping up to begin the action, the three ships being on the same tack as ourselves, but hove to.—At twelve o’clock, when we ought to have relieved the watch, and half of the ship’s company gone to bed, we were employed in securing the yards, and getting ready for an action, which was pretty sure to be very severe, and at this time the Forte made no secret of her intentions ; for she shewed a double tier of lights from her ports, and there she lay at quarters, and ready to receive us.

“ It was then, my lads, that had the Sibylle’ crew been disposed to shew them the white feather, why they might have done it, and not been much to blame ; there before her lay three large ships, one known to be a superior force,

and the other two looked nearly as large,—who they were, or what they were, nobody knew and very few cared.

“ Shortly after midnight, the Forte filled and tacked, being close upon our larboard bow, and as her guns began to bear, she did us the favour, without asking who we were, to blaze away upon us.—This is mighty civil, said the boatswain, for I was at one of the forecastle guns and heard him; but we’ll return the compliment before long.—Well, there was every captain of a gun blowing away at the match, and puffing out his cheeks, as if he thought he could blow hard enough to freshen the breeze aloft; but the captain thought, the closer we got, the sooner it might be over, called out, ‘ No firing until I give the word.’

“ ‘ Fore-castle there.’

“ ‘ Sir,’ said the officer at the quarters, there was not a word spoken, and the Frenchmen must have thought we were taking it coolly.

“ ‘ Man the fore-top-masts tay-sail, halyards, and splice the jib halyards,’ they were shot away, and down came the jib,—the Frenchman

had now passed our lee beam, when up went the helm, and we passed close under her stern, so close indeed, that we barely cleared his spanker boom end, and we gave her such a salute in the stern, that the carpenter would have been employed for a week, in clapping in new cabin windows.

“ In the meantime, one of the other ships took shot at us, but nobody cared about her. No sooner had we raked the Forte, than we came short round on the larboard tack, ran up upon her starboard broadside, and we gave them such another turn of round and grape, that some of the crew began to talk about garlick. It was now about half past twelve, and we got at it fairly, broadside to broadside, and never for one hour, were we a quarter of a mile apart, hammering away as hard as we could, blazing away from every gun, cheering like tars, and getting the best of it, for the Frenchman fired too high,—one shot came too low, for it mortally wounded our captain, who was carried below to linger and die,—whilst Mr. Hardyman

took the command, and gave us a cheer to rally us.

“ About half past two, the Frenchman began to think they had caught a Tartar, and after one or two more rather badly directed broadside, she ceased firing ;—upon this we stopped, for who would fire upon a beaten enemy ? At this time we were close alongside, the weather was nearly calm, and we heard the Frenchmen jabbering away like a parcel of monkeys caught in a cocoa-nut tree ; but when Hardyman called out silence, fore and aft, you might have heard a pin drop, on board of us.

“ ‘ Frigate ahoy,’ said he, giving her a hail, which might have been heard at the sand-heads, —but there was no answer,—all hands on board the Frenchman were thinking of themselves more than their ships.

“ ‘ Oh,’ said Hardyman, ‘ if they can’t hear my voice, perhaps they can hear another broadside, so at it again my lads ;’ and at it again we went,—all hands were certain that a little more advice in the shape of shot, would bring them to their senses, and we blazed away more

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furiously than at first. They never returned the fire, so we hailed again.

“ ‘Avast firing, and silence on the main deck,’ Hardyman tried it again, and this time he had a speaking trumpet, but still there was no answer, although we heard their chattering louder than before, and all of a sudden, up they jumped aloft to make sail, and see what they could do for themselves, in the way of escape.

“ ‘Loose top gallant sails, let run the fore clew garnets, sail trimmers make sail, fire again on the main deck,’ said the noble fellow, who was as cool as an ice island—‘I have got you snug enough, and it’s my fault, if you get away.’

“On board the Frenchman they were all in confusion,—and on board the Sibylle—we were all steady, we had sail made upon us before the Forte could loose her canvas—we saved the mizen top men some trouble, for down came the mizen mast, and before all the seamen had come down from aloft, away went the fore and mainmast and the bowsprit, and there a wreck on the water was the frigate, which had before skimmed it—the terror of the trade. They

heard our three cheers, for who could help it—it was not the cheer of a bully, who had beaten a weaker man, but it was a general feeling of satisfaction that the business was done, and was meant not to insult them, but to convey our joy one to another—her colours came down—the Forte was our prize.

“Hardyman—who was a thorough seaman, as well as a gallant officer—instantly anchored, and whilst Mr. Manyer, the third lieutenant was getting a boat’s crew ready to board the Forte the order was given to clear the deck—to repair the rigging, and get up new sails for bending, for the other two ships, prizes to the Forte, might yet give a little trouble, and we had plenty before us; the running, rigging, and sails were shot to pieces, all the mast and yards were badly wounded, and up aloft we were severely mauled; but so badly did these men, who were to eat us without garlick, fire, that we had only six round shots in our hull, and although we had been hammering close alongside of this large frigate for two hours and a half,

yet we had only five men killed, and fifteen wounded. I just mention this, do you see, Mortimer, that you, as a greenhorn, may know that it does not follow, because two ships are alongside of each other hammering away for a couple of hours, that a man must be either killed or wounded; and there is no necessity to imitate the Irishman, who having seen a shot come though the bulwark, run and clapped his head in the hole, thinking, that although the fire was so heavy, two shots could never come through the same place. We managed a little better, for after the capture we counted three hundred round shot holes in the hull, and in spite of the Frenchmen having lined their sides with cork, to prevent the splinters, we managed to kill sixty five of the *mangé sans ail* gentlemen, and to wound eighty out of three hundred and seventy, which she had on board when she fired her first shot.

“ Well, when Mr. Manyer got on board, he saw a sight enough to make a porcupine put its quills down, the dead and the wounded were lying about the decks,—the former almost cut

to pieces, the latter moaning and groaning for assistance, whilst their shipmates were down below stowing away all the money they could find in their pockets, and clapping two suits of rigging over their masts heads, as they thought they were bound for a cruize on a foreign station, where they would find no dock yard to replace the expended stores.—The Frenchman had lost his three lower masts—they fell with all sail upon them ;—the bowsprit was lopped off close to the figure head ; and never since the time that Admiral Noah went to sea in the ark, was there ever a ship afloat more like his own, for he had neither mast nor sail to work off the lee shore, where the land was good enough to heave in sight. On the topsides of the Frenchman you might have counted about a thousand musket ball holes, which a party of the Scotch brigade we had on board, managed to bestow upon the enemy. These brave fellows got blazing away from our quarter deck, and going through the load and fire, as coolly as if they had been on the top of the High-

lands, in their natural trousers on a frosty day.

“Is it not better, my new lads, to serve your king and your country—than to play pitch halfpenny with that old fox there? And as for you, Mortimer, who seem as if you were half a sailor already, and had left your love behind you, I think you will be a man not afraid to look the devil in the face, and one who will spin a yarn, as long as the main top bowling, when you get a three cornered scraper over your figure head, and trudge about Greenwich in knee breeches and blue stockings. Your love-making is over now for a time:—you have chosen the service for your future life;—and this I tell you, as an old bird now placed to catch the young ones, that if a man does his duty like a man, he will find his life pleasant enough, if he is first on deck, and last below at furling sail—always at muster—never shutting an eye when on look out,—none of your short hair and long teeth—not too fond of grog—or his hammock, but able to do his

duty aloft, and sing a song on the forecastle —his captain won't overlook him—the first lieutenant won't report him, and his country won't forget him."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Arrow, before she arrived at Portsmouth, was boarded by the Doris, an English frigate, which, being in want of men, helped herself to those on board the Arrow, who had been impressed; and thus Albert Mortimer, began a foremast man, having the advice mentioned in the preceding chapter, pretty well fixed upon his mind;—he, however, did not exactly relish his first reception.

“Come up here,” said a midshipman, who was standing over the side, “jump up, you pressed men—tce a line along the deck; take off your hat, you Jemmy Jessamy chap! (this was Albert) why, you look as lightly rigged as a barber’s clerk on a Saturday night!—don’t

you hear me," he continued, as he knocked the hat off his head by force, "you had better hear me, and mind me also, or I will prick your ears with a crowbar."

The blood of all the de Lancys got above fever heat; but prudence cooled it down. Luckily it did so, or the midshipman would have been felled to the deck; but as the blood and the anger cooled, the time requisite for this was not lost.

The men were placed in a line; the first lieutenant was apprised that they were ready for inspection; and an examination began, in order to discover if any of them had been at sea before, and were calculated for top men without a little preparation in the way of practice. As the first lieutenant ran his eye down the list sent from the Arrow, he remarked—"There is one volunteer amongst these men—Mortimer."

"I am Albert Mortimer," replied the young man so addressed, his blood not being exactly at temperate heat.

"Come here," said the first lieutenant, "is that the way you have been taught to answer a

question? take care what you are about—you have entered into the service?"

"Yes," replied Mortimer.

"Say 'Sir,'—and be d—d to you—when an officer speaks to you."

There was a tear started into Mortimer's eyes which his pride could not controul, and with a more respectful manner, he answered—
"Yes, Sir."

"Now none of your shore going pranks again, my lad; speak properly and I dare say we shall agree pretty well. Here, Mr. Featherquill, take care and enter this lad with the name, as a volunteer."

"Were you ever at sea before?"

"No, Sir."

"How old are you?"

"Nineteen, Sir."

"You'll do your duty in the mizen top? Here, Harrison," continued the first lieutenant, calling the captain of the mizen top, "here's a man for you in your watch; show him the rigging, and practice him for an hour in running up and down."

"Come here, my lad," said Harrison, who was a kind hearted fellow, "here's your walk up and down this—never let go one hand, until you have shifted the other—keep your eyes down at first on the rattlines, and before we pipe to grog, you will be able to go aloft."

It is the first lesson in life, which is most difficult to learn. The infant's first totter on its legs, the prelude to a walk, is often interrupted by a fall; the first effort of the swimmer is often the sure accompaniment of a mouthful of unsolicited water; and the first step upon the rigging of a ship, is not effected without danger, or without dismay. But when confidence is gained, the difficulty is overcome, and the seaman, in spite of the roughness of the sea or the rolls of the ship, walks without fear up the rigging, as perfectly secure as if on the quarter deck.

Albert heard the titters of some, as, with cautious grasp, he held the rattlines; and as he got further from the deck, his clutch became firmer and firmer. But Albert was no coward; having got to the puttock shrouds, and down

again without an accident, he recommenced his career aloft, and very shortly found, if all his tasks were as easily overcome, he should shortly be able to follow the advice given him by the man who had entered him afloat.

His endeavours were not overlooked by the first lieutenant, who, having watched him, as he took his accustomed turns on the quarter deck, called to him to come down—sent for the purser's steward to fit him out as a sailor, and as Harrison had foretold, the grog had not been piped before he had been aloft, and got over the first lesson. But when left to his own reflections, bitterly did he regret the step he had taken; it had been done on the spur of the moment; and Mortimer had sense enough to know he had humbled his mind as much as his body, by consenting to herd with those so much below him.

Amongst those who had been brought from the Arrow, he stood foremost; there was none of that dogged determination to resist every command, which was seen in the others; but knowing that he was alone to blame for the

choice he had made, he cheerfully acquiesced in all demands, and was resolved, at least for the present, to do his duty in that station of life, into which he had been pleased to place himself.

Before he had been long on board the *Doris*, he had become a great favourite. The superiority of his manner; his being able to read and write—accomplishments not very general in the navy in 1801—gave him great advantage. He, in time, wrote the letters of all his mess-mates, and read them the answers; by which means he became well aware of their secret histories; and from being useful in the first instance, he became a kind of superior being to whom they all looked up. But this was not the life likely to be pleasant to one who could not bear the yoke even of a brother. Neither could he, as a seaman, follow up his inquiries relative to Herbert, or discover the secret he most wished to fathom. He was now fairly in his brother's net. He found, from his mess-mates, that greater difficulties existed in obtaining his discharge than he imagined: he was

told he might see the shore, but never walk on it; in short, that under the delusion of the song that seamen were free, he was in reality, a slave in a prison, obliged to work, and unable to escape.

Mortimer soon began to grow into a seaman; he took to it kindly; did his duty steadily; and was more than once at the yard-arm in a heavy squall. He had learned to pull an oar, and belonged to one of the cutters; and although apparently a contented man, was in reality the contrary, and watching every opportunity to desert.

In the summer of 1801 the *Doris* joined company with the *Beaulieu* and *Uranie*, two frigates of near her size, and took up her station off the point of St. Mathieu, to watch the French and Spanish fleet in Brest Harbour. Days and nights were past in the same monotonous employment; the enemy's fleet seemed little disposed to go to sea—and the English squadron as little disposed to lose sight of them.

In a squadron of this kind, of course existed no small emulation ; the different *nœuvres* were smartly executed, and among those men who did their duty best, *Mor* was one.

In July, a corvette was discovered at anchor under the batteries, in Camaret Bay. She was believed to be in a secure roadstead—raised her anchors with top gallant yards across her bows showed her large ensign from her peak and seemed lulled into the belief that no attack could be made by the English squadron to disturb her.

To see her, was to covet her; and she was not frightened by obstacles, which would require a little labour to remove. It was soon circumscribed fore and aft the decks, that the captain resolved to cut out the French corvette, which looked so trim and ready for sea; and after the report was spread, the word was passed for those who chose to volunteer for that service, to go on deck. It needed no boatswain's mate to enforce the order; the quarter

was crowded in a minute; and every man seemed to press forward, to offer his life in the cause.

Amongst the foremost was Albert: he had become a regular sailor; he took off his hat, smoothed down his hair, and requested leave to go, saying he hoped the regular boat's crew would have the preference. This however was not strictly complied with; but he was one named for the service; and having gained his own point, he left the rest to succeed the best way they could. Then came all the preparations for so desperate an undertaking; for the corvette, the English well knew, would be placed in a posture of defence, and every precaution taken to frustrate any attempt which might be made upon her.

On the 20th of July, the boats of the Doris and Beaulieu left their ships, equipped for a desperate service; and such was the ardour of the men employed, that they strove one division against the other, to near the corvette. In this effort to be first, the regularity which would better have been preserved by a little less

enthusiasm, and a little more discretion disturbed; the two divisions separated; those left behind, for some reason or turned round, and pulled back again; those who had reached the entrance of the bay not willing to meet a certain defeat by pushing alongside without the aid of their comrades lay upon their oars awaiting their arrival.

In this position they remained, until the first streak of daylight warned them of the necessity of returning; for to attempt the attack without the protection of darkness, was a madness not contemplated. With many a bitter reproach against those who apparently had not done their utmost to reach the bay, the oars were again in motion—the boats discovered the corvette—and any advantage derivable from a surprise, evidently lost. Much useless expostulation took place; and Mortimer, whose courage had been screwed to the sticking point, was loud in his complaint against the commander who had given the word to return, without endeavouring to regain his lost distance or advance to the attack.

In the meantime, the Frenchmen were not slow to profit by the discovery. The corvette, about noon of the 21st, weighed, and ran farther in, under a strong battery, and there was moored. Some soldiers were embarked, her quarters were cleared, the guns loaded, almost to the muzzles, and other precautions very gratifying to those on board the corvette, and very much the reverse to the attacking party, were taken.

The more danger, the more honour; the greater the difficulty, the greater the merit. The captain saw the corvette removed; but it did not for a second alter their determination; on the contrary, when the corvette in all pride of security, by way of laughing at her enemies, hoisted an English ensign under a French one, the crew of the Doris gave three cheers, and became the more anxious to try their strength; nor did they care one straw for the additional force, in the shape of a large gun boat, which was placed at the entrance of the bay, to give timely notice of the approach, or the turning and twisting of the rammers, as

the French artillery prepared the guns battery. The dark was anxiously expected and when half past nine came, the crew of the boats, without awaiting the usual summons.

Again under the same leader, they left the ships; and with hearts and hands ready and willing, they approached the bay with regularity than the preceding night. They mustered fifteen boats in all, containing hundred and eighty officers and men. The *Robust*, a seventy four, having added her gun and pinnace to the boats of the frigates.

On leaving the shore, a boat was discovered and the commander of the expedition, judging it proper to secure it, went himself with others in chase, leaving the rest to follow on his return, or slowly to progress towards the corvette, as they had still a distance of several miles to pull, before they arrived alongside the enemy.

Some time elapsed, and the commanding officer did not return. The next in command was Mr. Maxwell, who was a lieutenant (

Beaulieu, thought it just as well to get close in shore, in order to be ready for an attack, when the commanding officer should return. The force was diminished to one hundred and eighty men ; but never were there more resolute hearts, than in those boats ; and not one surpassed Albert, who, to the common brute courage inherent in most men, joined the honorable feelings of a man of high family. There was no cheering ; this was a business of silence and secrecy, to creep upon the enemy unawares, and to capture the vessel, without bloodshed, by a surprise.

As the muffled oars dipped silently in the water, and the boats as silently approached the object of attack, many and many were the eyes which were uselessly turned in the direction of the other boats, the crews of which would have so materially assisted in the enterprise ; but it was all in vain ; the night was far spent, the corvette lay at anchor not a mile from the boats, which now rested on their oars ; and in that half hour of suspense came all the reflection, or the danger—Albert was there unknown as a gentleman—the brother of the de Lancy

might be killed and thrown overboard without one word ever reaching that unnatural brother to whisper his security.

Not a word was spoken, the seamen, as they rested on their oars, listened with intense anxiety to catch the sound of an oar; but time gradually elapsed; it was past midnight; and they wanted not more than two hours and a day to break. To delay was useless; to retreat foreign to the wishes of every man in the boats. The disparity of force was an alarm to the determination of the men cheering.

Maxwell now called the boats close together and gave his instructions. It was a great trial for this officer to run; but he was confident of success. He knew the character of British seamen, and began his short address in a manner most likely to animate them.

"The more danger, my lads," said he, "the more honour!—We must go on without the other boats. Thomson, Wilkinson, and I—vey—you are smart fore topmen on board your own ship, let us see how quick you can be in loosening the corvette's fore-top-sail—you

not be nice in casting off the gaskett—a sharp knife and an easy conscience, is what you most require ;—now do you hear, you three fellows—don't stand talking to those Frenchmen on the forecastle, we'll make them comfortable ; your duty is on the foretop-sail yard ;—but let's see, we must pick out another.”

“ Allow me, Sir,” said Albert, “ to volunteer. I dare say I shan't be behind hand.”

“ Well said,” replied Maxwell ; “ what ship do you belong to ? ”

“ The Doris,” replied Albert.

“ I shan't forget you, my lad ;—what's your name ? ”

“ Mortimer, Sir.”

“ A devilish good name too ; now listen, in the Beaulieu boats, you are to board on the starboard bow.—Neville,” he continued, addressing the officer, who commanded the Uranie's boats, “ you, with your own ship's boats, the one from the Robust, and the remaining one of the Doris, will board on the larboard bow ; and Burke,” said he, “ you must make up in your boat for the loss of the other five, belonging to

your ship, which seems to have taken a time to chase one boat ;—mind, two of you will cut the cables—there's no use for an winded yarn about this business. There at present a French corvette, I am in before two o'clock, she will be clear anchorage, with an English commanding—get into your stations in two division stand by, directly we are discovered, in way like British seamen, who are resolved to succeed in the enterprise."

The boats soon backed into their stations and the word being given to give way, but quietly, the gallant fellows advanced to attack.

It was a little after one o'clock, when the corvette was distinguished. The French expected the attack, had been equally well every preparation had been made ; three hundred and thirty nine men were on board of her ; the guns had been loaded to the muzzles ; and the confidence that they could repulse their vessel from every boat attack, was throughout the crew and the soldiers on

of her. They now saw the enemy advancing, and prepared to give them a warm reception.

As a matter of caution—not that any doubt existed in the mind of the commander of the corvette, as to the hostile intentions of the boats—he hailed them. It was answered by Maxwell, calling out to his brave companions—“Now then, my lads!” then dashed the oars in the water. The silence was broken by the cheers, which were heard far from the scene of action, whilst the animating words from each officer, as they said—“Give way, my jolly dogs!—hurrah for the first on board!”—was all that was requisite, to make every man feel the importance of his best endeavours; and it seemed as if all hearts had felt the appeal; for each boat’s crew, no longer tenacious about a discovery, bent their backs, and gave way with all their strength.

No sooner was this done, than the contents of a broadside came in amongst them. The grape and canister shot fell like hail around them;—and the water was dashed into the boats by the round shot which came bounding

along, duck and drake fashion. This discharge enough to have checked the advance of foe, was received with a loud cheer—"N your time, lads, to get on board before the load again ; give way," said Maxwell, as he up in his boat, and the words were repeated by Neville and Burke, who imitating leader, stood up and cheered their men.

In the meantime, the French soldiers of a steady well directed fire, with musketry the shore ; whilst the troops, who had embarked, were not slow to imitate so good example. Between each shot might be heard "give way—give way,"—whilst the loud of the oars was heard on board the corvette.

Each boat pulled to the station allotted and the crews made one simultaneous effort to board.—The French, armed at all presented a bristling front of boarding backed up by the small arm men, whilst armed with tomahawks slashed away bravely to defend their ship.

Every exertion was made to overcome resistance ; but without effect. The

crews were driven back in spite of their clinging like cats to the ropes, and fighting like devils to gain the decks ; whilst the French, who saw the first attempt of their enemies checked, gave a cheer of defiance, and actually boarded the boats. Never, since man to man coped in single warfare, was more desperate bravery exhibited on both sides. The Frenchmen, who had so gallantly followed up their success, never returned to their ship ;—a struggle ensued—and the intruders were thrown overboard.

The fire arms of the English were now perfectly useless, and abandoned ; but, with their cutlasses only, they again endeavoured to board—again the Frenchmen bravely opposed them. But the assailant is ever more desperate than the assailed. Undaunted by the furious fire from shore and ship—undismayed by the forest of pikes which bristled round her bows—unappalled by the frequent death-wounds dealt with savage ferocity from the boarding pikes, the British seamen, unused to a reverse, again and again made the desperate assault, and

finally established a landing on the fore-top-sail.

“ Hurrah for the first aloft,” was heard from Mortimer, who, sweeping his cutlass to clear his way, jumped upon the rigging, dropped his cutlass on the deck, and springing aloft soon about to lay out on the fore-top sail. Here he found another precaution had been taken. All the gear was stopped up along the yard:—a second, the sharp knife removed that advantage;—the foot rope fell; he was the first on the yard!—nay, so expeditiously was this effected, and so well did the men stationed to loose the sail obey their orders, that in the small space of three minutes, after gaining the first footing on deck, the French corvette, known as the *Chevrette*, had her topsails and courses cut adrift, and the yards hung down for sheeting home.

The noise of the falling sails sounded so dreadful in the ears of the French that the rattling of small arms, or the clash of the cut-throats. They felt they were prisoners; they knew, that once removed from the ba-

ies, they had no confidence to bear up against their assailants. The first tremor of fear, which was manifested by one of the crew of the Chevette jumping overboard, run like an electric spark through all the rest. They threw down their arms; and jumping overboard, endeavoured to reach the shore; whilst the sight of the canvas animated the English, who rushed toward the quarter deck, and notwithstanding the gallant opposition of some, who disdained to fly, succeeded in capturing it.

The French still hoped to retrieve their disgrace. From the main deck, they opened an harassing fire of musketry;—but the cables were cut—the ship under canvas—an English seaman, named Henry Wallis, was at the helm, and in spite of his wounds, he stood true to his post, and was the first to call out with a steady voice—“ She goes a head now, Sir, for she answers her helm.” Then was the cheer of victory heard!—and those below, who still vainly clung to a last hope, finding that hope gone, surrendered and ceased firing.

The firing from the shore, which was now

confined to the large guns, put down the li
air of wind which was favouring the prize,
she now became much harassed by the batte
—but she was a prize, and little did the cr
of the different boats heed the Turkish sal
which came well directed toward them.

On the forecastle was John Brown,
boatswain of the Beaulieu ; he had escape
a miracle ;—the boat in which he had
placed, finding how desperate the case was
ward on the first of attack, dropped under
quarter, and Brown led the way to b
establishing a landing in the quarter gal
but here all progress was impeded—the
had been barricaded up, and the boats
kicked in vain, until finding all attempts
less, he clambered up to the taffrail, and
upon the quarter deck ;—at this moment, h
the landing was made good in the forecastle
he knew that a boatswain's station was
Sweeping his cutlass round his head, he r
out—" Make a line there, you d—d p
vous," and rushing forward, succeeded in
ing his station. He then took his " call

and at every order, gave the regular pipe, as if he had been on board his own ship—the *Beaulieu*.

As the shot came fast, and Wallis was severely wounded, Maxwell called another man to come to the helm; but the answer came from Albert, who standing close to the quarter master said, “I can assist him, Sir.” Again a light breeze sprung up—the sails were trimmed—the *Chevrette* was fast drawing from the land, when the six boats, which had been absent, returned, and Maxwell relinquished the command.

Great was the satisfaction of the different captains at the result of this gallant enterprise; warmly indeed were the seamen welcomed by their messmates; and many were the tears shed over their fallen friends. The slaughter had been proportionate to the resistance!—eleven had been killed—and fifty seven wounded;—whilst on board of the *Chevrette* eighty five had been killed, and fifty seven wounded.

When the excitement was over, the victory won, the prize secure—Albert looked at the

deck, covered with the dead, with horror and dismay; he pondered over the immense sacrifice of human life for so trivial an object; as he deeply regretted those who had fallen, he overlooked the advantages of such gallant undertakings in the fear which they strike in the whole nation, and make them feel the superiority of their enemies! but it was his first sight of the dead!—there, horribly disfigured, corpse upon corpse; whilst the decks resembled a human butchery, than a place christian to command. From this reverie, from the determination which he formed to leave a service which even glory could render palatable, he was awakened by Major pointing him out to the commanding officer as a man worthy of promotion, and requesting that Albert Mortimer might be mentioned as Captain Brisbane, as one deserving his notice. This gratified his vanity; but he observed a guarded silence and respectful manner, as he inwardly cursed the hour in which he was prompted to relinquish his better prospects, to run headlong into a service,

might have been his greatest ambition as an officer—but which was degrading to him as a common seaman.

The great, the brilliant exploit, above mentioned, found praise from every lip. It was a daring, well planned, well executed attack, and only inferior to the cutting out of the *Hermione*. Albert had embarked in stirring times; Nelson's fame was high; the navy was the bulwark of the nation; every action worthy of record, found a poet ready to embrace its fame; the song passed from ship to ship, from fore-castle, to fore-castle; and when the thorough bred seamen talked over their fun on shore, and twisted the long yarn of strange adventures on a Saturday night,—then it was, that the song went round, in which the great deeds of our profession were recorded, and the young, and the old—the grave and the gay—caught an enthusiasm from the words, and felt anxious to try their powers against the inveterate enemy of Great Britain.

Albert's mind, although touched with sorrow, felt the inward glow of satisfaction at having

done his duty ; but his was an educated and he burned to have the praise given self, and not shared by those who were in their hammocks ; neither did he more gratified when he saw the officers ed—justly promoted, he admitted—and self overlooked, because he was too seaman to occupy even an able seaman's

The Doris, shortly after, took a cruise Bay of Biscay. Some few merchantmen captured ; but no action occurred worth record. The ship, after the time had or which she had been ordered to cruise, turned to Plymouth sound, in order to a refit, preparatory to her sailing for the India station.

CHAPTER IX.

SIR Ronald de Lancy returned to Raven Castle, after an absence of a month. His marriage as yet, had not been unhappy : he saw, with a certain degree of satisfaction, that his wife had cast aside all little marks of the attorney's daughter, and strutted about in the gaudy plumage she had assumed, as if such feathers had been her natural clothing ;—neither had she shown any particular burst of temper—the worst presage of matrimonial inquietude. If, on the one hand, she had given no cause of offence, she had not, on the other, manifested any ardent love ; she seemed to consider herself as one so highly situated, that any approach to conspicuous affection, would be beneath her. It was all very well for paupers to be in love ;

but in her lofty situation, a preference was required; the familiarity of lovers was in way consonant to her pride. She was partner of him, who possessed Raven Castle, and such ladies should not feel what human nature has too bountifully bestowed on all.

Sir Ronald regarded her with great suspicion; he had been forced into the match to save title and his money; and although the original will had been given to him, and he had deserved it, he still felt that he was within the grasp of Rawlinson, from which he could not extricate himself. He had never manifested any disposition to cheer a solitary hour; he much relished conversation;—he was naturally taciturn;—habitually a bookworm;—and the honey-moon, which some lovers spend in a manner most likely to weary both parties in indifference, was, by this pair, spent in amusements more calculated to ensure happiness. Sir Ronald read, and was amused; Lady Lancy worked, and was satisfied.—Sir Ronald kept his thoughts within his own heart; Margaret, accustomed to be alone, never felt

silence as contempt; but busied herself in erecting those airy edifices, called "castles in the air," which best suited her imagination.

The return to Raven Castle would have led a stranger to believe that the parties had been married many years, and were fashionably indifferent to each other. Sir Ronald took possession of his library; and Rawlinson and Margaret seemed to have erected a kingdom in the drawing room. Rawlinson was a constant companion at dinner; he treated his son-in-law with every marked respect before his servants and with vulgar familiarity when alone. There was no step on the ladder of iniquity down which Rawlinson had not stepped; he had now consummated the last act, by making his daughter the wife of a man who, he well knew, was intentionally a murderer; and having so done, he thought it right to tell her the position in which she was placed, and to warn her that a rival to the title and fortune was alive; and, as Sir Ronald was the creature formed from his breath, so his breath could destroy him. His object in this was to share

the fortune to a certain extent ; and to with the de Lancys, as much as possible, from public.

Laura Mackenzie was, by Rawlinson, considered as a silly girl, just old enough to companion, and not likely to disturb harmony of his plot, by any prying curiosity in family society. Thus affairs progressed three months after their return ; no one seemed to inquire after, or court the new Lady de Cy ; the Molesworths most scrupulously avoided them ; and the only inmate she had, who just arrived, was Laura Mackenzie.

Sir Ronald was a magistrate ; but seldom ever was he called upon to act. Around the estate was a peaceful neighbourhood, so far from the track of travelling vagabonds, that they were not initiated into the secrets of vill. They lived quiet and unmolested ; and scarcely had any mystery been unveiled or hidden, when the sudden disappearance of old Herbert.

The answer to all inquiries had been, Sir Ronald had discharged Herbert ; and he had left the place on the night of the

charge ; but no one knew where he had gone. Some old cottagers, with whom Herbert had spent many evenings, had suspicions concerning their friend : they knew his heart too good to leave those he had known so long, without one adieu ;—and, as a secluded place, like the neighbourhood around Raven Castle had seldom a novelty to attract attention, or a circumstance to excite suspicion, this hasty withdrawal of one, who had been from his youth upwards their companion and friend, seemed to loosen the tongues of all the old women and the gossips—and various conjectures soon got afloat.

“ I tell you,” said one old woman, Mary Lancing, to her husband, “ Herbert never passed our door when he left the castle. I have heard him say, he knew more than he dared to tell ; and I am sure and certain, the great squire has got him shut up in one of his towers ; or he is down there,” she said, pointing to the earth, “ and some one would be afraid to touch the corpse.”

“ I’ve often a thought about it, dame,” replied her husband, “ and I can’t but think Joe Blackburn knows more of it, than the King of

England ; and, as sure as I live to see row, I'll go to Mr. Molesworth, and if any truth in the business, that good ferret it out. They seem to keep t quite hushed at the castle ; and it is still water is the deepest."

True to his intention, on the following ing, old Lancing called at the vicarag Molesworth never denied himself to his ioners ; he looked to heal all their and, as far as this earth, or the spot he ir could be made a paradise, he had the tion of seeing around him a peaceful dustrious population.

" Tell old Lancing to come in," he " it is the first visit I have ever had fr Poor fellow!—he is getting fast on seventy ; and I suppose requires a little ance."

Old Lancing came in, and stood abo from the door, bowing, and plastering t nants of a fine head of hair over his —but he did not speak a word.

" Well, Lancing," said Mr. Mole

"what is the matter with you ?—what has happened ? come, speak out—and, as far as I can assist you, I will."

"Thank your reverence," began old Lancing—it is nothing that has happened to me or mine—blessings on you, Sir !—we do as well as we could wish ; and I want no assistance whatever."

"Well then, Lancing, what is the object of your visit ?"

"Old Herbert,"—replied the countryman.

"What of him ?—I know he has been discharged ;—do you wish me to speak to Sir Ronald to reinstate him ?"

"From the day that he was discharged, as you say, your reverence, no man in or out of the castle has seen him. He never came to visit any one of us—we, with whom he had lived as a brother, and to whose children he had been as a father ;—we know he could not have passed the house, without calling to say he was going for ever—and we think"—

"What do you think ?" interrupted Mr. Molesworth.

"Why, Sir, I axes your pardon, for bold as to think before your reverence, wife and myself, two poor old bodies, born on the estate, think that"—

"Well, go on, my good fellow, it is ble I can know what you think, with tell me."

"That old Herbert is *there*," said pointing to the ground—"and that n man read the service over him."

Mr. Molesworth started from his cl advancing near to Lancing, who st like an honest old Englishman conscie wrong, he said in a low voice—"Do y him dead?"

"Aye," said Lancing, nodding —"and the Lord have mercy on him

"Amen,"—ejaculated Mr. Molesw parently unconscious of what he utter recollecting himself, he continued—"C from the door, Lancing—come near now tell me, have you ever inq him?"

"Often—often, your reverence—

we have asked—but the answer we get, and which we think is true, is—that he is gone.”

“It certainly is strange—very strange. Did he go before the wedding?”

“Yes, your reverence: for Master Albert inquired of us all, if we knew where he lived, or where he was born—if we had ever heard him speak of friends otherwise than of those around him; and this was before Sir Ronald married.”

“But what suspicion have you, that he came by his death unfairly—even if he should be dead?”

“None much, your reverence—excepting that Joe Blackburn was seen with a pocket handkerchief covered with blood, which my wife will swear belonged to Herbert, and when he was asked about it, he turned colour like, and said he bought it—and though I know its wrong to say a word against any one, yet as sure as the rain fell this morning—Joe’s the worst man in the parish.”

“Well—well, Lancing, I will consider what

is best to be done. In the meantime, inquire of the servants at the castle, him last—and if he removed his cloth I will do what is right to fathom this matter.

“We are poor people, your reverence we hope, honest people;—if by and by should be found out that poor Herbert by his death unfairly—we should be sorry. God knows I should be very loth to say it! for after all, Herbert may be alive;—it is our duty to our neighbour, Sir, as you say, to let the guilt fall on the guilty.”

“Good bye, Lancing,” said Mr. Molesworth, stopping his volubility; “leave it to me to call to-morrow upon Sir Ronald, and I shall find Herbert alive—and well, in some other country.”

The morrow came; and the unexpected and unwelcome tidings reached Sir Ronald. Mr. Molesworth requested to see him, and he felt guilty ever feel, with painful emotion, the sting of the virtuous; and the very pulse seemed to beat against his heart as he was about to say “I will lay you bare.”

Sir Ronald received Mr. Molesworth

library, and with the easy grace of one doing or about to do a good action, the upright pillar of the church entered the room. He appeared to disregard the cold manner in which Sir Ronald received his proffered hand ; and with the air of a man accustomed to the world's deceitful ways, he sat down on the chair to which Sir Ronald, without saying a word, pointed.

“ My business, which has caused this intrusion, Sir Ronald,” said he, “ relates to yourself in your magisterial capacity. He who is the representative of the law is, of course, always accessible. I mention this, to account for my visit, which, otherwise, as I am aware my presence is not requested, might seem a presumption.”

“ Pardon me,” interrupted Sir Ronald, his deep voice and slow articulation giving the full value to every word. “ Men of your profession are privileged ; in every house the door should be opened, and the presence of the clergyman, a welcome ; and much I regret that Mr. Molesworth has denied me the pleasure

of his company as a friend—to which now indebted as a duty. I trust you are well?"

There was a faltering in the last few which would have given a stranger as to the sincerity of the questioner—those who deal much with the wary, have been known as a subterfuge to avoid business on which he was about. Mr. Molesworth made a suitable reply after a few such remarks as are generally made to pave the way, and which show uneasy both may feel in each other's. Mr. Molesworth, having prefaced his by acknowledging the delicacy of the as it referred to Sir Ronald's establishment, came direct to the point, and asked Ronald had heard any tidings of him since his discharge, as some suspicion existed in the parish, against a man named Black of indifferent character, and who was suspected of having murdered him?

It is true, that Rawlinson had said Herbert was in Cornwall, but Sir

never credited it; it was next to an impossibility that the old man could have escaped; and all the guilt of the transaction beat loudly against his heart. Still, so well had he schooled himself, that no flush of fear flew across his countenance—neither did his lips blanch with apprehension. With his usual distinctness of pronunciation, he said that Herbert was alive and in Cornwall, and that he wondered a man of Mr. Molesworth's sagacity should listen to the tittle-tattle of old women, who, because they had met with a little ingratitude, so common to us all, imagined that their friend must have been murdered.

“Your remark,” said Mr. Molesworth, “to a certain extent, is true; but rumour, once afloat, is not easily stilled. The old people declare he never passed their cottage. There is this handkerchief of Herbert's yet unaccounted for; and your own servants declare that all his clothes remain, at this moment, untouched in his room. You must admit that it has a suspicious appearance, that an old man who was known not to be rich, should

neglect to return for his clothes; that one of his fellow-servants should ever heard of him; that his wife's family be in ignorance of his existence. 'tended to excite suspicion, and, suspicion excited, is not easily satisfied. I think Ronald—I speak it with great deference to your better judgment—that if Blackburn apprehended and made to give some of this property—for he might have taken him after he had left the castle—that inquiry would satisfy the tenantry, and no harm could come from the public notice made by yourself, that you knew of his existence."

"My time, Mr. Molesworth, is much occupied; but if the inquiry will give satisfaction, I cannot object." Sir John rang the bell, and desired one of his servants who acted occasionally as constable, to fetch Blackburn before him. Mr. Molesworth begged he might not interrupt Sir John whose kindness, perhaps, would permit him in the interval to amuse himself by rum-

the library, known to contain some old and valuable books. Sir Ronald nodded assent.

Far different were the thoughts and feelings of those two men. Sir Ronald was resolving in his mind to fix the murder, if Herbert was dead, upon Blackburn. He was fortifying himself to meet every remark with a calm unmoved countenance—to appear open and manly—to court investigation—and to impress upon the mind of his reverend visitor, that no one regarded the suspected loss of his old servant more than himself. At this time Rawlinson was absent in London; and consequently, Sir Ronald was unable to get the information confirmed, which he discredited, as to the existence of old Herbert. To Sir Ronald, the confirmation of the death would have been most pleasant intelligence, but he felt the impossibility of such evidence being produced; and this rendered his schooling himself less difficult.

Mr. Molesworth, unwilling to pry even into the studies of Sir Ronald, took down the first

book which met his eye, and seating by the table, read some pages of the history of France, and continued at this until the arrival of the servant, who called the constable, with the much belied Joe to burn.

If anything could have strengthened the suspicion against the miserable object now in jeopardy, it was his villainous looks. His eyes were small and far apart, giving him a bad countenance; a cunning appearance. His forehead was low, the top of the head small and the hinder part large; the organ of destructiveness was highly developed, and craniologists would have pronounced him a villain without examining any case in which he was suspected. Joe was a tall, well-proportioned man, exceedingly well put together, and one whom a prudent man would have avoided on a dark night in a narrow lane. Joe put on a show of childish innocence. He flattened his head down over his flat forehead; and then he took his hat about, and looking at the ribbon, he got his

a comfortable position to support his weight, and looking up at Sir Ronald, gave so searching a glance, that even the magistrate felt a sensation which tingled all over him.

"Blackburn," commenced Sir Ronald, "suspicion has been excited against you;—it appears you are possessed of a handkerchief, known to belong—or to have belonged—to my old trusty servant, Herbert, who has disappeared from amongst us in a most mysterious manner. It is true, I discharged him from my service, and that would account for his having left the castle; but you know," continued the magistrate, "as well as I know, that since his discharge, he has never been seen. What do you know about this business?"

"I know no more of the matter, Sir Ronald, your worship, than you do. Perhaps," he continued, as his cunning eyes met those of the Baronet, "not quite so much."

A slight flush gave to the sickly countenance of Sir Ronald an appearance of mo-

mentary health—it was dissipated in a
and he continued :

“ Blackburn, you know that I have entertained any suspicion against a in the parish. Neither do I suspect you it is requisite that you should give an of that handkerchief, which I believe you self have admitted to have been the of Herbert.”

“ I have no objection, Sir Ronald the least, to tell you and Mr. Mo how I came by the handkerchief. It was days, or rather nights, before your was married, that I was out late, the Raven Cliff, looking at a light was on board a vessel some distance—”

“ Stop—stop,” said Sir Ronald, with impatience, “ we don’t want to hear midnight walks, or suspicions of smuggling.”

“ No, your honour,” interrupted Blackburn as his eyes twinkled with animation; not say it was midnight; it was not

o'clock—the second bell had not rung when I saw Herbert and *another* man walk towards the cliff.”

“What can this long and uninteresting story have to do with the handkerchief? How did you get the handkerchief, Sir? Confine yourself to answering that question.”

“Blackburn,” interrupted Mr. Molesworth, “I am sure neither Sir Ronald nor myself would attempt to fix a murder upon you, or to hint that you were concerned in any way in disposing of poor old Herbert. He might have betaken himself to some other county, not wishing to displease Sir Ronald by hovering about the estate after his discharge, and, for aught we know, may at this moment be alive and well; but the circumstance of your having an article of his property, and that covered with blood, requires explanation.”

“I know, your honours, I know it does; and I want to tell you how it happened that I got this pocket-handkerchief. As I was a saying—I was walking near the cliff, when I

saw two men coming towards me—
ing very near the precipice.”

“ Who was this other man ?” in-
Sir Ronald, looking Blackburn in the
fixing his eye steadily upon him—wh
which he held in his hand, was seen t
with a quick convulsive motion. T
tion was one of despair—it was t
interrogatory which the wounded h
gests, and which is calculated either t
or relieve the questioner.

Blackburn’s cunning look was not
Sir Ronald, and the answer :

“ I really, your honour, cannot
certainty, but he was about your size.

“ Swear that man,” said Sir Ron:
book was given—the oath was admin
“ Now, answer this question,” conti
Ronald ; “ will you swear that you do
who this man was ?”

There was a suspense of a
or two—a hesitation such as me
when they calculate chances. But

short pause, Joe said, "I do not know who it was."

"Did you see his countenance at all?" interrupted Mr. Molesworth, who was also a magistrate.

"No, Sir," answered Joe.

"And you swear upon your oath—remember, you call God to witness—that you do not know who this other man was?"

"I do not know him," said Joe, in a dogged manner.

There was evidently a kinder feeling, from this moment, shown by Sir Ronald to Blackburn. He turned to Mr. Molesworth, and remarked that there was an honest manner about the man—and that although circumstances were apparently against him—he had yet no doubt, but that he would entirely exculpate himself from the charge. "Now, Blackburn," he continued, "go on with your account of this business."

"As I was a saying, your worships," he began—"I saw these two men coming along towards me."

"Stop,"—said Sir Ronald—"at this time

you did not know either man to Herbert."

"No, your honour, it was dark, and not distinguish either—I do not know induced me to conceal myself—but I lay down close to the brink of the steep pacliff, the two people were coming close to me, and kept so near the edge, that I thought they must have been concerned with the gingers—who, sometimes, as your worship land their cargoes in the bay beneath. I was at this time drawn from watching the ship by a false fire out at sea—and, when I came round, I only saw one man, and he was alone, striding hastily away. Ah, think gentlemen are concerned with these matters sure enough, so I'll light a fire, and see what will come of it—so I went over the cliff there, struggling for his life, and holding on to a small projecting rock, I saw the man missed, and was in time to save the life of Herbert."

Sir Ronald started, but instantly recovered himself.

Blackburn continued—"I then lifted

on the cliff, and, taking his handkerchief, I wiped the blood from his forehead, for he was rather hardly hit; and, as he required some little time to recover I lit the fire, and waited there for some moments. When old Herbert was able to speak, I questioned him about this fall; but the poor old fellow wouldn't say a word about who the man was, who got him to the edge and then pushed him over. After I had lighted the fire, I came back to see how the old fellow got on; but he was gone, and I had his handkerchief—and that's the way I got it,—and I'll swear my bible oath of it any day. So you see, Sir Ronald, there's another who knows more about it than I do—and who did not wait to lend a hand to unload the smugglers."

"This is," said Mr. Molesworth, "a very unaccountable and a very discreditable history of yourself. First, we have this fact, that you were out for an illegal business—you were concerned with these smugglers; and next, to light the fire, the usual signal for the coast being clear—or else how came you to find a fire

ready prepared over the cliff, so that those it could not see it?—and where did you get the convenient light which was so ready to hand?—I tell you, Blackburn,” continued Molesworth, with much emphasis, “the story is not even a probable one; it is more likely that you, and your precursors, finding you were discovered by him, disposed of him; that the handkerchief was too good to be left in the pocket of that fellow, and is thus, by the unerring Providence, become the great evidence against yourself. I think, Sir Ronald, you must agree with me in these remarks.”

“It looks odd, certainly,” replied Sir Ronald, “but he has told a very connected story, which we have no evidence in contradiction of. I confess I feel a difficulty on this occasion. I see no ground for the detention of that man.”

“Surely, Sir Ronald, you must see the danger of allowing him to go at large. There can be more or stronger presumptive evidence against this man, than the circumstances

bert's never having been seen afterwards? Is it likely that an old, valuable, tried servant, so trusty a friend, as even to have been a witness to your father's marriage—would have quietly walked away, after a man had attempted his life—and not say one word about it to yourself, or have given information as to the approach of the smugglers? I cannot for a moment believe the words of this man; they are altogether improbable, almost impossible, and I think we should ill do the duty which we have sworn to do in the impartial distribution of justice, if we did not detain this man, until further evidence can be brought against him.”

“Oh for the matter of that,” said Blackburn, a little stung by the clear view the magistrate had taken of the affair—“if you lock me up until Christmas next, you will get no more intelligence than you have got already; but if I go at large, and hear any more, I can come and whisper it to Sir Ronald—or, if you offered a reward, perhaps some one might bring forward the tall man, for instance, who pushed him over.”

"But it appears, Blackburn, that you did not see the man push the other."

"No, I did not see it, but Herbert, although he would not disclose the name, admitted the fact;—but they say murder will out—and, when rogues quarrel, honest men get their due. Hence I shall find this all true,"—and, as he concluded this speech, he cast a hasty glance at Sir Ronald, who perfectly understood the signal.

"Well, Mr. Molesworth," said Sir Ronald, "what is to be done in this affair?"

"Better, Sir Ronald, withdraw the sooner for a moment." He was accordingly withdrawn.

"I think, Sir," began Mr Molesworth, "we cannot with propriety release this man who has in no satisfactory manner accounted for his possession of the property;—on the contrary, I think he has involved himself in a crime, purposely to protect himself against a greater."

"That may be, and is very true, Mr. Molesworth," replied Sir Ronald; "but there

evidence against this man—he has accounted for the possession of the property, be it true or false, and we cannot gainsay it. I think we had better discharge him—indeed, I do not see how we can do otherwise.”

“ We can remand him, until this day week ; in the meantime, I will not be inactive in any endeavours to bring to light the circumstance of this mysterious transaction. They can do no harm—as I will take care Blackburn’s family is provided for.”

“ Be it so, Mr. Molesworth ;” then, ringing the bell, Sir Ronald desired the prisoner might be brought forward. He thus addressed him : “ Blackburn, it is the opinion of Mr. Molesworth that you are in some manner implicated in the mysterious departure of Herbert ; you, at any rate, are the last person who saw him, and we find you with some of his property. For my own part, I believe that Herbert yet lives ; but that, for some reason best known to himself, he has absconded without the usual farewell on such occasions. But, as the business must be examined into, we

have resolved to remand you until this day week. Take him away."

Blackburn was removed—he never said a word—he never appeared to care the least about his confinement: but, with the resignation of a thorough villain, he walked leisurely away.

"I fear," said Sir Ronald, "as the prisoner was withdrawn, that he is a man steeped in iniquity; but so cunning that he will not easily be discovered. However, I do not believe old Herbert to be dead; he was a singular old man, and I think very little of his absence, even although he has left his clock behind him."

"I hope," replied Mr. Molesworth, "you will be right in your conjectures; but we owe our duty in endeavouring to bring the truth to light. I wish you a very good morning, Sir Ronald;" and Mr. Molesworth withdrew.

CHAPTER X.

EVERY man, of any observation, must, in the course of his lifetime, have remarked how soon, how easily, the mind of a youngster becomes depraved. It is true, conscience is a formidable barrier; but it becomes less and less vigorously defended, as the attacks become more frequent; and even the heart ceases to beat with increased velocity when a crime is committed. Thus it was with Albert; he herded with men who were reckless of all danger, who were hardened in all iniquity; the low language, which at first disgusted him, was soon familiar to his lips. The duties of religion were gradually forgotten; for in those days the service of the church was not too frequently performed on board his

Majesty's ships ; and Albert de Lancy was gradually sinking in the vortex of dissipation which whirled around him.

Now, no man was louder in the song than Mortimer ; his voice was good, his memory retentive, and, when the breeze swelled the canvass aloft, and the ship heeled over she darted through the sea—the duty of the day being finished—Mortimer was ever first to sing to his willing audience, either a hasty composition of his own, or some one of the numerous songs which he had caught from his ship-mates.

Praise sometimes ruins a man. The art is to praise with discretion ; too much to pride ; too little to discontent. The haviour of Mortimer in the cutting out of the *Chevrette*, had been lauded by all ; and on the song, the elegant composition of one of the fore-castle men, his name was mentioned in the chorus, where it again occurred with enthusiasm was always excessive. They allowed the remarks of his ship-mates. “ It was well done—and for a youngster

first cruise—I shouldn't wonder if he died an admiral, after all." Another would add, "Aye, these are the boys who do credit to the ship. Mortimer ought to have been made a petty officer; for if a man can steer a ship when the shot are flying about him, he could stand and say, steady, boys! steady! in going into a harbour—or, luff, my lad! luff! at sea, as well as old Feathervane himself."

The officers of the ship were not less kindly disposed towards Albert. Courage is ever esteemed in the navy; it is the first requisite; for many great events have been achieved by courage alone, from which the prudent would have availed themselves of the better part of valour—discretion—and left unessayed.

But even this universal praise failed to reach the heart of Albert, and to render him happy. There was for ever floating before his eyes, the stately turrets of Raven Castle—the long galleries—the splendid apartments—the church, and the last scene he had witnessed therein. Neither was Laura Mackenzie absent from his mind. He had turned

from all he loved in Margaret Rawlinson, the fair bridesmaid; and, unusual as it was and is, in naval poetry, to mention such a name, yet Laura was frequently on his lips even in the wildest effusion of his young blood. He wished again to visit the scenes of his youth; the fate of his old companion, Hervey, was yet unknown to him; and he was already tired of a service, in which he saw all the difficulties of advancement, and felt the numerous insults which arise from petty rivalry.

The Doris arrived in Plymouth about a fortnight after the affair with the Chevalier, and Albert had now to witness one of the most revolting sights to which the navy was subjected.

The crews of the different ships being composed of men liberated from the galleys, partly from those impressed into the service, it became imprudent to allow them any communication on shore, for desertion would inevitably followed so rash an allowance of reasonable amusement. In order, there

keep the men from too eager a desire for the shore, unfortunate creatures, misnamed women, were admitted on board. These poor, abandoned, wretches, were as fallen in decency as in virtue; scarcely an expression fell from their lips unpolluted by blasphemy, or undefiled by indecency. Every vice which degrades the human character might here be seen; whilst, perhaps, the most reviling of all, was the most common, drunkenness. To see a woman in that state, robs the mind of half the poetry of life—it is a sight more calculated to disgust her associate, than the most abandoned levity.

The Doris soon swarmed with these vermin, and there being no retreat, Albert was obliged to share in the revelry he despised. He was forced to give the song demanded of him, and receive applause from those, whose very features and characters were to him the most disgusting.

The next day added more and more to his abhorrence of the service, in which he had so incautiously entered. He was ordered on

some trivial service in the boat to which belonged ; two marines were placed in he prevent any one of the crew from landi and the free-born sons of the ocean fo themselves, within boat-hook's length of 1 native land, prisoners. He was refused mission to put his foot on shore, and b turned, more and more disheartened.

Again was he subjected to the cont which raged on board ; and which is fatal, from being so familiar to the c spirits which surrounded him. It s beneath the character of a seaman to shi cure ; hence the general propensity to c enness—the disposition to use tobacco different disgusting shapes—the langua all the worst parts of a sailor's life ; for s endeavoured to *appear* a sailor, and learnt that which he seldom could q get, even in maturer years, and when tl excitement had been withdrawn.

It is customary for marines to be p sentinels in various parts of the ship whe chor ; and their orders may generally be

up in a few words, " To take care not to allow any boat alongside without permission ; and to be especially alert to prevent desertion." The officers of the different watches, as the ship was moored, generally left the ship in charge of the mate of the watches ; these, not unfrequently, took a comfortable caulk on the deck, wrapped up in a warm great coat ; the quarter-master lolled over the hammock netting, both eyes comfortably warm ; and, occasionally even a sentinel on the forecastle, might be found, with his musket leaning against the bulwark—himself, dozing into forgetfulness.

The scene below, revolting as it was, drove Albert from his proper berth ; and although the orders of the ship were against any man sleeping about the deck ; and any one loitering about, after eleven o'clock, would have been suspected of some sinister intention, he hazarded all reproof, and at that hour crept, unperceived, up the fore hatchway.

On arrival at the break of the forecastle, he discovered the sentinel asleep, near the long

gun on the starboard side ; and, as if conscious that his motive would be suspected, he stepped cautiously forward on the larboard side ; the ship was riding to the flood tide—a very light breeze scarcely ruffled the water—and no sound was to be heard.

The idea of desertion instantly occurred to him. He was well enough aware of the penalty, if he was discovered ; he knew the lightest punishment would be dozens of lashes on his bare back, tied up and exposed to his ship-mates ; whilst, previous to his punishment, his legs would be confined in stocks, and he an object of universal observation to the rest of the crew. That idea dampened his spirits more than all the danger of the undertaking ; for, never contemplating desertion, he knew not if the tide was not near its ebb, that the ebb might come on before he reached the shore, in which case he might be blown out to sea, and die the lingering death of a strong swimmer, who struggles against his fate even when that fate is the most inevitable.

He turned his eyes towards the shore

was not further than he had swam before; but then it was a long and perilous task, in which the cry for assistance would have hastened the punishment he would have merited. He could, he knew, creep down the cable and allow himself to drift by the ship before he struck out; but the sentinel at the gangway, or the one on the quarter, might observe him—the least splash might create alarm—and alarm once excited is not easily stilled. He had but little time left for reflection; he had heard the “all’s well” of the sentinels at six bells, of the first watch; and now it could but want a few minutes of that time when all would be on the alert—and obliged to repeat the same words.

The hazard was great; but Laura Mackenzie seemed to encourage him to the effort. Disgrace the most appalling to the sensitive mind, whispered, “Prudence—and bide a better time;” whilst his own abhorrence of the scene below hinted, “The brave never shrink from danger—even if you are detected, you will be applauded for the courage which you have

manifested in the attempt; think of all you leave and all you have to gain."

In a few seconds Albert de Lancy floated by the larboard gangway of the Doris, and was well within hearing as the incautious sentinels called aloud—"all's well."

The difficulty was began, not ended; and long did the time appear before Albert dare hazard the attempt of turning round to swim. His object was to reach the shore any where, and to avail himself, as much as possible, of the influence of the tide; but although he struck out manfully in the direction of Cat-water, yet the distance hardly seemed to decrease. He is a good swimmer who can manage to compass a mile in an hour. It was much more than that distance to the part on which he meditated landing; but he had yet four hours before daylight broke. He kept his eyes fixed upon the land, for at least a quarter of an hour; when feeling the first warning of fatigue, he turned on his back to float, when to his dismay he perceived the Doris had swang to the ebb tide, and that he was

drifting towards her. To gain the shore now, he felt was almost beyond hope ; it was hard to choose between the only alternatives left—to gain the ship, and by the cable again ascend to the forecastle—or to be carried to sea, and meet a lingering death. Fear soon exaggerated the evil. He felt himself growing nearer the ship ; and to avoid her, he used his utmost strength to pass at such a distance as to evade, perhaps, the more cautious eyes of those entrusted with the middle watch.

He passed in security—and what then were his thoughts ? The tide now hindered his return to the ship from which he had deserted. Before him was the channel, into which he was fast sweeping ! Now, indeed, the only object which could have rescued him was fast dwindling away in the distance ; and as any exertion would have been unavailing, he submitted to the fate he had courted ; and lying on his back, gradually floated out to sea.

How often does the anxious seaman wish for daylight—for night ever makes the danger greater ! Those who have striven against the

fury of the storm in darkness, whilst the loud roar of the boiling surf as it dashed against the rocky shore to leeward was heard, can well feel what Albert felt. The sensation is not akin to that which the eager discoverer of America must have experienced, when in darkness he first saw the lights on shore:—his was a hope that his best wishes—his opinions were realized; that rewards, honors—all which make men strenuous in exertion would be showered upon him; that his name would be handed down to the latest time, and every nation of the world would cherish it with gratitude and esteem. But what could the dawn of day, bring to console the sea-tossed deserter? His life might be spared; the all benevolent Providence might rescue him from the surrounding danger; he might be restored to his parent land; but how? almost naked—perfectly friendless—without one farthing by which he might purchase a sufficiency to still the cravings of nature; every creature interested in delivering him up to justice—rewards being placed upon his apprehension! and why had

he deserted ? not from any act of tyranny on the part of his captain, or his officers ; but because he was disgusted with the people with whom he was destined to associate.

As the waves lifted him up, as they rolled by him, bitter indeed were the reflections which crowded upon his memory. So young, and yet perhaps to die—and not even to die in peace with his own brother, against whom his hand had been raised. He now reconciled himself, by forgiving that brother all the injury he had inflicted upon him ; and he even prayed for his prosperity. The figure of Laura Mackenzie now floated before him in imagination—all which young imagination could conjure up of ideal beauty—all that the fondest heart could dictate—came rushing in his mind.

“ I will not die,” he said, “ if struggles long and determined can rescue, or save me. I have been in dangers as great as the present, and been saved ; and I have no forewarning that this is my last hour. But come what may, I am prepared. Within myself, all is peace and comfort ; and saving that hope has drawn

• a glowing picture of what may be my future prospects, I could die, even here—the sea my pillow and my grave, without a murmur.”

He had now floated for more than an hour, and had been carried a long—long way beyond the Doris; but as he turned to resume his swimming, he saw his old ship riding gently at anchor, not quite so far distant as even he could have wished. He now directed his course as much towards Cawsand bay as possible. He saw, in that direction, plenty of boats, all eager to gain the anchorage; but of all the world, not one eye was directed towards him; not one soul knew his danger; and not one being cared for his existence—saving, perhaps, her who was sound asleep, enjoying all the dreams which health and innocence might supply,

To reach Cawsand bay was impossible; the tide swept more to sea. To attract attention was hopeless; the best telescope would hardly have brought him within notice; and there he might have died, and been the food of sea gulls, which, even now, impatiently hovered

over him, waiting for the repast; but for the near approach of a fishing boat, which was stretching in towards him before she made her last tact to reach the bay. The boat nearly ran over him, before he hallooed; he was rescued by seamen, as gallant as himself; he unhesitatingly avowed himself a deserter; and they, as frankly, declared they would conceal him. By six o'clock he was in a cottage in Cawsand bay.

CHAPTER XI.

ABOUT four miles from Truro, there stood a small cottage sequestered in a pleasant vale. It had descended for years in the family of the Mackenzies, which, although not a Cornish name, had, by intermarriages, become almost a Cornish people. The family had originated in a wealthy inhabitant of Glasgow; who, wishing to forget for ever the land in which he had toiled for his wealth, and where his low origin was known, had retired to this spot to hoard the gold he had amassed, and to enjoy all the miser's luxury of counting that which he was too cowardly to spend.

If ever a law was required in this lawyer-ridden country, it was required then, to force

these lying wretches to contribute their fair proportion to defray the expenses of the state. The miser who hoarded thousands, was taxed almost as a pauper; and the tax-gatherer, that scarecrow in the field of industry, hardly thought it worth the ink he wasted, to tap at the door of Archy Mackenzie. He died, and his heir dissipated his money. The cottage became the property of a maiden sister, who bequeathed it to her nephew, who, again, left it to his widow; who now, with one daughter, inhabited the almost forgotten abode.

“And you have seen him lately,” began Mr Rawlinson, “have you, Mrs. Mackenzie?”

“Indeed I have,” replied the old woman; “he was in great distress; and poor as I am, I could not refuse Laura’s request to share even the little I have with so old a servant.”

“That is spoken like a good charitable Christian; and charity is a good legal release for trifling sins—it covers a multitude of them, and is doubly blessed when it comes from those who drain it from a scanty store, and

who might themselves be benefitted by the gorgeous overflowings of the rich man's purse. It does you infinite credit, Mrs. Mackenzie, and I should like to share in your pleasure, by alleviating, as far as my poor ability would warrant, the distress of this poor, old, ill-used Herbert. Where does he live?"

"He has left his abode," interrupted Laura, whose residence at Raven Castle had given her some insight into Rawlinson's character; "left it some days since," continued the girl, carelessly, "and, poor fellow, in great distress. Perhaps, if you leave that which will be most charitably disposed of, with my mother, we might be enabled to make it reach the intended channel."

Rawlinson fixed his eye on Laura; but the girl, quite unconscious of the glance, continued the meditative employment of knitting a purse.

"Everybody," continued the lawyer, "seems indisposed to remain quietly at home. That Albert de Lancy—ha! you start, Miss Laura,—pray have you seen him? he, too, has wan-

dered away from his brother's house ; and, if not sheltered by a poor-house, or fed by the King in one of the goals, must be a vagabond, by law, from his strolling propensities. The Vagrant Act is sufficiently comprehensive to include him in its merciful grasp ; for, having no home, he must necessarily sleep under a hedge or a haystack, and that is crime enough in a pauper."

" I think," replied Laura, whose face crimsoned as she spoke, " that your daughter's brother-in-law, might claim some better distinction at your hand, than a rogue and a vagabond."

" I speak, my dear," replied the artful attorney, " of the law of the land. Any misfortune might drive a man to be houseless, and then he comes under that class so well described by Churchill :—

" Beggars of every age and station
Are rogues and fools from —— situation."

" And what drives Albert de Lancy to this

state?" asked Mrs. Mackenzie. "Surely the Baronet has wealth enough to supply the wants of his own brother?"

"Mr. Rawlinson," interrupted Laura, "is the best person in the world to whom you could apply for information, on so interesting a subject."

"He merely, I believe, assaulted and robbed his brother, Madam; that is all, I believe; and Sir Ronald was insulted when he offered forgiveness. You see, my dear Madam, that Miss Laura imagines it quite desirable that brothers should knock each other about, like bluebottle flies in a butcher's shop."

"Stop, Mr. Rawlinson; I saw Albert de Lancy return the purse. I believe he was driven, by the most aggravating of all circumstances, to strike his brother; I am sure he repented the rash act; and, in all probability, has long since served the hard apprenticeship of those, whose daily toil but ill supplies the food of life; and who, when oppressed by fatigue, lie down to rest upon a miserable pallet, with scarce covering enough to warm their aching limbs."

“ Young ladies are often misled by reports,” replied Rawlinson, “ and, in the warmth of their imagination, colour rather too highly. The poor sleep more soundly than the pampered man, whose nights are interrupted by night-mares and alarms ; no thief despoils the labourer of his profits, and midnight murderers skulk behind a hedge, as the unworthy prey passes by. But, to those in affluence, every step is that of danger ; and the window of the rich often yields to the centre-bit of the housebreaker. The night creeps on, and I must return to Truro ; to-morrow I will renew my visit, and endeavour to discover the retreat of Herbert, whose poverty I will relieve. He can return to the castle ; Sir Ronald will again receive him, and his old days may be spent in that abode, where his youth of honourable service, procured him a good and an excellent character.”

“ There is something strange in that man’s sudden appearance amongst us,” said Laura, as Rawlinson left the house. “ He has not left his daughter to become the haughty mis-

tress of the castle, uncontrolled by his advice, or his presence, without some urgent business had prompted him to make this long, and apparently useless visit."

"It is the first time he ever came here," replied Mrs. Mackenzie; "and, if my old eyes do not deceive me, never was there a man with a worse countenance. To-morrow, he returns; perhaps Herbert had better see him."

"No," replied Laura! "it were better he left his charity here, and returned without an interview. We can always dispatch the old servant to Raven Castle; if, indeed, the poor wretch would hazard his life by so doing."

"How can he hazard his life?"

"Merely," replied Laura, unhesitatingly, "on account of his age and infirmities; the distance he would have to travel might be too long for his old legs. It is late, dear mother—good night."

When Rawlinson left the cottage, he made the best of his way towards Truro. The night was dark, and a small rain began to

fall. As he walked quickly along, he thought much of the dreariness of the road, and pondered over the cunning answers of Laura Mackenzie, who had evaded all his questions concerning the actual abode of Herbert. He had come this distance to learn from Herbert's own mouth the story of the cliff—thus to hold his son-in-law tighter within his grasp, having, at all times, the witness ready to be brought forward. Rawlinson was a man not easily foiled; he was as great a villain as ever Sir Ronald could have selected to forward his envenomed and unnatural wishes; cunning in his profession, sagacity enough to discover its numerous flaws, he made his clients believe in his sincerity by his pretension to religion; which character he put on and put off, with as much dexterity as a play-actor changes his garb; taking special care, when under this disguise, never to hazard a word which could be construed into levity; whilst on the other hand, when it was requisite to appear gay with the gay client, he was lavish of his

anecdotes, in which there was no tincture of religion, no moral which redeemed the looseness of the story. As he plodded his way homewards, revolving in his mind his future conduct in regard to Herbert, he felt himself suddenly seized by his collar, and held by a hand too powerful to be loosened.

“Come, shipmate,” the stranger began, “I have no time to loose; necessity, they say, has no law, and therefore bear a hand; unrigg yourself, and clap this gear over your mast-head. Fair exchange is no robbery; I want your clothes, and I give you mine. Quick, or by all that’s holy, you’ll never live to eat your supper.”

“That voice,” said Rawlinson, as the stranger’s grip was a little relaxed, “is familiar to me.”

“Not so familiar as the hand will be, if you stand there and disobey orders;—quick—your coat and waistcoat! the lower rigging will do—you may keep that; don’t say I wanted to rob you—take everything out of your poc-

kets, and tell me where I can forward you your traps, when they have served my turn."

Rawlinson was soon released of his fashionable attire, and, in return, was dressed in a round jacket and guernsey frock, on the front of which he saw the name of "Doris."

"Now, then," said the stranger, "part company. But tell us your name before you haul your colours down."

"If you send the clothes to Mr. Rawlinson, at the Crown Inn, any time within forty-eight hours I shall receive them."

"I shan't forget the name in a hurry. There! top your boom and make sail."

Rawlinson did not require a second hint to depart; he had taken care to remove his money from his waistcoat pocket, but he had not, owing to his fears, removed the various papers in his coat pocket; he was glad enough to escape, and making the best of his way, arrived at his inn. The stranger had left him his great coat, which, being buttoned, concealed the garb beneath.

No sooner was he seated in his own apartment, and released from all fears of a second visitation, than he rang his bell, and announced that a robbery had been committed, and shewed his dress.

"The Doris," said the landlord, as he looked at the guernsey frock; "why, there are bills stuck upon every wall in the town, mentioning the name, and giving the description of the deserter, who run from that frigate about ten days ago, with a reward of three pounds for the fellow's apprehension; you can't be the man, surely, and think to blind me with the robbery."

"Nonsense," replied the irritated attorney. "Surely, it is bad enough to be robbed of one's coat, without being suspected a deserter and a liar. Let me have some supper."

Boniface, although well inclined to obey the last order, was ready enough to disbelieve certain portions of the story; and, forthwith, ordering supper for the gentleman in No. 3, he ran to a dead wall, against which, the bill

stickers had been liberal of their paper. "Here it is, sure enough; 'Deserted from His Majesty's ship Doris, Albert Mortimer.'" Then followed a description. "'Five feet, nine inches in height, dark hair and eyes, rather fresh complexion, small whiskers, good figure, twenty years of age. The deserter is supposed to have worn at the time he left the ship, white-duck trowsers and a guernsey frock, on which the ship's name was marked.'" The customary reward for his apprehension followed.

"Cannot be him," said Boniface; "this chap has light hair—carrotty withal—large bushy whiskers, is not much taller than a wine pipe; and, as for his figure, it's more like the square build of a mile stone, with a butcher's tray stuck in front of it. However, he has been near the deserter, and if I give a hint to one or two of my workpeople, I think we might catch my gentleman under a hedge. Twenty years of age! why, that carrotty-headed tiger is fifty, and has as much care on his countenance, as a man with the

lock jaw. I never throw a chance away, and I'll have a look out myself this night."

Returned to the inn, Mr. Rawlinson was duly informed of the description of the deserter, which corresponded exactly with that of the person who had so unceremoniously borrowed or exchanged the coat.

Albert knew that the cottage of the Macenzies was not far distant from the spot on which he now stood. The fishermen who rescued him, sheltered, fed, and housed him for one day—but, at night, they urged him to depart, as they were apprehensive that he might be betrayed by some of their associates, who were not influenced, perhaps, by any strict notions of honour, weighing that in the opposite scale, in which was placed three sterling pounds.

It was a service of some danger to Albert, for, in the times of which we write, it was a matter of extreme difficulty for a deserter, dressed as a sailor, to make good his escape. He left those who had saved his life, during a heavy storm: and that which would have

deterred others from venturing abroad, to him offered a kind concealment; for the first time in his life, he was fearful of meeting the eye of a human being. At a quick pace, he struck across the country, carefully avoiding any house, and keeping close to the hedges, directing his steps into Cornwall; during the day, he selected the most unfrequented path, or seized a quiet spot as a place on which he might repose.

In this manner, he continued, until the seventh day, when having seen his name published as a deserter, his dress accurately described, his features, height, appearance, all mentioned in the hand-bill, he resolved to exchange his dress with the first man he happened to meet, before he presented himself to Laura Mackenzie, from whom he hoped to learn something relative to Herbert. A countryman happening to pass, Albert was informed that the residence of Mrs. Mackenzie was within a bow shot.

It was past ten o'clock, the night dark and dreary, and the brother of the possessor of Raven Castle had no shelter from the coming

storm. He stood before the humble cottage which contained all he loved on earth. How often did he pace before the little gate—how fixed were his eyes on the only window from which a light appeared. To him, the light was as welcome as that which greets the eyes of the doubting mariner, from whom the sun had withdrawn its setting splendour, and left him uncertain if the rock-girt coast was within five, or one hundred miles—and when, dreading the impervious horrors of the leeward shore, the mist grew thicker, and the wind increased, some momentary clearance showed the welcome light, broad upon the beam, and sufficiently distant to establish the security of the vessel; oh, pleasure inexpressible—known only to those whose lives are perilled on the broad ocean, where the barrier against eternity, is a slender plank—to whom each breeze may be fatal—each sea a grave.

Albert felt a security, to which he had, for one week, been a stranger. It was true, the coat which concealed his person was larger than was requisite, and even his elegant figure ap-

peared to disadvantage enveloped in such an acre of cloth ; he paced round the front of the cottage—the light was removed, and again replaced ; it was evident some one was on the alert, and who could it be, in the imagination of a lover, but that person, the object of his affection. It was not long before the window was opened, and Laura Mackenzie, as if courting the breeze, which was fragrant from the jessamine, appeared. Albert crouched under the hedge ; for although the very object he sought, was now before his eyes, yet he was rather unwilling, or afraid to address it ; she saw him not, or the song which she carelessly warbled, would have been withheld, and the window closed ; but still she lingered—still she sang—and only paused, when the approach of footsteps warned her that delicacy was the handmaid of discretion.

A countryman apparently bent with age and enveloped in the white domino, a smock frock, came slowly along the road, his trembling hand was supported by a stout stick—a breath of wind might have been an adversary against

which he could hardly have contended ; the poor old man seemed lingering on the earth yet verging towards his grave.

“ Come quicker, quicker,” said Laura Mackenzie, whose impatience chided the slow advance of the old man—“ quicker, I say Herbert, for I have much to say, and you must be on the alert.”

“ Heavens bless the voice !” inwardly ejaculated Albert, “ that thus warns me that my oldest friend is at hand.

“ Aye Miss Laura,” answered the old man, young ladies never consider that old age stiffens the joints, and bends the back. When I was young, I could walk faster than many who now chide the decrepitude of years—and my breath which now hardly supports life, was then sufficient to keep life and soul together even if I ran up a hill ;—but here I am, Miss, quite close enough to listen to you and do your bidings.”

“ You must walk at least four miles this night, old Herbert,” replied Laura. “ I have reasons quite sufficient, why you should not be

so near the cottage for a day or two. Take this purse, your eyes can find it by this clear moonlight—there, more to your left: now you see it! go at once—any way but towards Truro; and the night after to-morrow be here about this time.”

“Heaven bless you, generous lady,” said Herbert, “you have given me enough to provide for a month’s expenses—let me give you half back.” Poverty is a tyrant, which would grasp all within its reach, and scarcely heed the generous hand, which proffered the assistance; but greater is the pleasure, even to the giver, than to the half famished wretch, who is the receiver.

“Keep it all, good Herbert, much as it may appear to be, I fear it will not keep you in the luxury of a dependant at Raven Castle.”

“Ah, good lady,” ejaculated Herbert, “would that I could return there, and not be suspected. I only wish I could see my young master Albert happy, as his mother wished and expected him to be—then these old limbs might sink into the grave, hands which often welcomed mine, might

cover this old body with the earth, and my last prayer should be for him who ever regarded me more as a companion than a menial."

"Begone, begone," said Laura, "there are footsteps approaching, and even innocence would not escape calumny, if it distributed charity from a window, when darkness made it a mystery."

The window was hastily closed, the light removed, and Herbert slowly advanced on the high road, in the opposite direction from Truro.

Albert who had overheard their conversation, felt eager to clasp again the hand of his old and valued friend ; but he was a deserter ; now the law might claim him as a thief—and all the boldness of a sailor dwindled into the crouching apprehension of the evil doer. Fortunately for him, he had conquered his anxiety, under the consolation, that a few of his rapid strides would soon overtake his friend ; for no sooner had Herbert commenced his retreat, than the voice of Boniface was heard, cheering on one or two persons in the pursuit of a thief—and deserter.

“Come, don’t be making such a noise, you, Wilson! keep close to the hedges, and walk fast. He cannot be far distant—ah, yonder goes a man—after him! after him!”—The pursuers soon gained upon Herbert whose pace was none of the quickest, whilst Boniface continued his description of the deserter, and described the coat, which he had so unceremoniously exchanged;—the hope of reward, animated the pursuers—and old Herbert was shortly overtaken.

CHAPTER XII.

"HOLLOA, my friend!" said the first man as he came close up to Herbert—"Where are you going to at this time of the night?"

"Where such men as you seldom go," said the old man, "Home—to my bed."

"Hold up your head, and let us look at your face—why you stoop down, as if you were afraid of showing yourself."

"Can you look me in the face like this," said Herbert rising his head, "if so—I have mistaken my men, and you are honest people."

"Thank you for the compliment," said Boniface. "I hope we may say as much of you, and tell no lie. He's too old for our man—go on, lads."

“Go on, indeed!” said Herbert, “and take care you don’t accidentally meet with a person who, doubting your honesty, hands you over to the constable.”

“Stupid old fool,” muttered one of the men, “what babbling blockheads men become, when they fancy age is a license to talk.”

Laura heard some words which alarmed her, and she again opened the window;—each moment lessened the sound—for Herbert continued his progress, and the conversation, save when the old man held up his head, gradually became more distant.

“Be not alarmed, fair lady,” said Albert, as he rose his head clear of the edge, which had concealed him, “poor old Herbert will not be molested—those men seek a younger, and a more desperate man.”

Prudence whispered that the window should be hastily closed—curiosity suggested there was no harm in asking the stranger concerning Herbert; and there was a something stranger than either in the sound of the voice, which

overcame all the scruples she might have entertained, and rivetted her to the spot.

"You know Herbert," she asked, wondering how any stranger could be acquainted with the man, who had, ever since his flight from Raven Castle, lived almost concealed.

"Long before you ever saw him, I knew him," replied Albert.

"Where?" asked Laura hastily.

"At Raven Castle," replied Albert, "where I first saw you, and listened to a voice, which might have persuaded any one but — hush—they come—you will see me again before long."

Laura stood at the window, astonished—motionless. She heard the returning footsteps of the discontented pursuers, but searching in vain for the form or figure of him who had addressed her.

The light, and the fair figure, which stood at the window, attracted the notice of one of Boniface's companions, who having taken the precaution of arming himself with a little Dutch courage imbibed with some ale—allowed his tongue an unfortunate liberty of speech—he

being accompanied by the landlord and stable boy—and the boots of the inn.

“ I say, my pretty lass,” he began, “ I wonder if you are looking out for your sweetheart—why he must be a bad un to be out a ramb-ling after the girls at this hour—and you must be precious in love with him, to keep your head out of the window, as if you were longing to kiss him.”

To this effusion Laura made no answer, for she was quite unconscious of the insult, so unexpectedly lavished upon her, but she still remained at the window.

“ Well, my pretty lass,” continued the half inebriated speaker, “ if he does not come, I’ll supply his place—just you stay where you are, and I’ll climb up and give you a kiss.”—The proposition was cheered by the boots and the ostler, and both remained to see the fun, while Boniface, annoyed at his unsuccessful cruize, returned to Truro, to warn some of the watchmen of their chance of capturing the prize, as in all probability, he would sleep in the town.

“Bravo, Bill,” said one, “you always was a fancy man with the women, and you have fascinated that maid with your soft tongue.—Silence you know, Bill—silence, gives consent in every thing, excepting when a man asleep is asked for his watch and money, and the gentlemen as asks the question, takes them both, before the sleeping man is quite sure they are gone.”

“Well, here’s for a try, I’ll just clamber over the paling, and be up with you, my lass, in a moment. Give us a lift, Tom, will you, for my head seems to be an overbalance for my feet,”—as he said this, he placed his hands on the summit of the railing, and standing on his left leg, offered the other for the assistance of the by-standers.

It seemed to afford considerable sport to all concerned, and they looked on with that peculiar delight, which men do, when they know they are concerned in mischief. Short however, was the look of pleasure—suddenly the ostler and the boots found themselves sprawling on the road, whilst the adventurous lover was seized

by the legs, and dragged from his hold—he fell heavily upon his face, and remained stunned by the fall, whilst his two companions, whose courage had been animated alone by the hope of reward, and the presence of their master, sprang upon their feet, and ran away. Albert stood with one foot upon the neck of the sprawling man—and little heeded the cry of deserter, robber, murderer, which the two pursuers so loudly pronounced.

“ Once more, Laura Mackenzie, you behold the destitute orphan—the supplanted lover—the pilfered son—the deserted brother, Albert de Lancy,—led by the remembrance of her whose kindness partly alleviated my sufferings—whose beauty charmed me—am I come here—and fortune follows where resolution leads. The man I most wish to see I find a pensioner on your liberality—but short is the time allowed me even to speak with him, who alone can unfold the mystery in which I am enveloped. I am now hunted as a deserter from my ship—as a thief, for I have taken the coat from another, and now as the highway

robber, who has assaulted the housebreaker. Get hence!" he said to the man who now began to struggle. "Go home, and tell your miserable cowardly companions that it was Albert Mortimer, the deserter, who drove them away and who revenged the insult you offered to that fair lady."

The hint was soon taken and Laura was alone with Albert.

"Why," she began, "do you subject yourself to be thus hunted, thus disgraced? Raven Castle is your home."

"No home, fair Laura to me—never will I cross that threshold but as one come to claim his just inheritance—and had I its wealth, I would strive to deserve your admiration, as now I deserve your censure."

"Oh, speak not so! here am I happier than surrounded by all the retinue, even of Raven Castle. You say you are destitute; wait, but one moment, and I will relieve you."

"Stop, fair Laura, and hear me. Within half an hour this road will be thronged with men who would hang their own brothers for

the paltry reward offered for my apprehension. Here I cannot remain—to serve me, let me see Herbert, or if that should be denied by the closeness of my pursuers—do you glean from him every word he recollects my father to have said concerning me—place it in writing and treasure it up, as an heir-loom ; and if one so degraded in your eyes could but demand a further favour, it is this, cultivate with your utmost care, the friendship now subsisting between yourself and Lady de Lancy. Through you lies my only hope. I live but to redeem my character, in your estimation ; for when all around looked black upon me, your countenance gave me hope of future happiness. How came I to this cottage now ? but for the hope of seeing you ;—and why linger I here now, when every moment is fraught with danger ? but to be near you—to see you—to hear you—and thus after days of danger—and nights of strife—and an existence of loneliness, once more restore myself to all my heart holds dear.”

“ I must not hear this,” replied Laura ; “ but

this I promise—all that you desire, I will most cheerfully do.”

“Then do this quickly,” answered Albert, “remember me—let not my absence obliterate me from your memory—and as I am constant in my affection, so may I be rewarded.—Hush, I thought I heard a distant voice.—No, it was but the fear of my coward heart which prompted the apprehension. The very night wind, which creeps through the almost motionless leaves, sounds heavily upon my ear; and the cheerful cricket, whose constant noise might inure one to its sound, brings with it some alarm. Remember me, fair Laura! for, as I floated, like a cast weed upon the ocean, and life itself fast ebbing away, I thought of you—strove against the impending danger, and escaped.”

“Not this time, my lad,” said a man who instantly leaped from the hedge, followed by others, and who seized Albert by the collar.

“Liar!” screamed Albert. “Lie there;” the stranger was prostrated on the ground, and the deserter was freed. A cry of terror was heard—

the light was extinguished—the window closed.

At one bound, Albert cleared the hedge and betook himself to flight; the pursuers as eagerly followed and the result was doubtful; one, fearful of disgrace, the other animated by the prospect of reward—one branded for life, if captured—perhaps, condemned to death—the other eager to bring the public thief to justice; but he who speeds to save his life, has *all* to gain. The speed increased, rather than diminished, and one by one the pursuers dropped off, until one only remained, and he, although fast losing ground, continued his almost hopeless pursuit. Albert still ran, until he imagined the many were far distant and the only one who followed nearly fatigued. Then he stopped, and awaited his pursuer; the short respite restored his almost exhausted breath; young—active—resolute—he was soon prepared to meet his foe, who, much older in years, was of a build which denoted strength. Advancing to the last, with the eager impetuosity he had commenced, the pursuer rushed upon his sup-

posed prey. "I have you at last," faintly uttered the stranger.

"Indeed," coolly replied Albert; "and my destination?"

"To a goal, scoundrel; why, as I live, you stand a self-convicted thief; that coat is mine."

"It belongs to as great a scoundrel as ever drew breath," replied Albert, "one Rawlinson, an attorney—do you recognize me?"

"Albert de Lancy!" ejaculated Rawlinson.

"The same whom Mr. Rawlinson would lodge in a goal, whilst his daughter sleeps in his victim's bed. Could three pounds ten shillings have induced a thriving attorney to leave his bed to hunt up a deserter?"

"It was the wish to take the thief who stole my coat."

"Now, my wish is gratified, to meet, face to face, where none can witness but the moon, the man, by whose intrigues, and by whose stratagems I was deprived of her who loved me, and the wealth which I know was mine."

“What avails the argument now? Would my daughter marry a thief—a deserter—a——”

“A villain,” interrupted Albert, “go on, Sir; I can assist you with a few words, which, as I have often lavished them upon yourself, are ready at my tongue’s command, when the object of my hatred is before me; but now I scorn to use words—place your hand upon my shoulder—say when you are prepared, advance your foot to mine—and, as your frame is the strongest—your judgment the most matured—your blood the coolest—every advantage will be yours, but the advantage derived from insulted honour; here let us grapple as foes—and as foes, let us part for ever.”

“Sir, you brand me as a dishonest man; nay more, as a villain; before this strife commences, justify yourself in that respect, and tell me in what manner I have so conducted myself, as to merit the reproach.”

“Can I be blind; can I be accounted an idiot?” answered Albert, “to see my own desolation and not be able to trace it to its

right source? You have ever been more like a master in Raven Castle, than one whose advice is solicited and paid for. When your daughter's affections were fixed on me, who did I find thwarting my views and prospects, but her father? I saw that man, who, before my father's death, was verging upon pauperism, suddenly become rich; I saw him, who never crossed the threshold but when invited, walk in as the equal to its proprietor; and I have seen him actually command that attendance, which society has forced upon welcomed guests. In every step of my life, since my father's death, you have watched me; wherever I go, I trace you; and as I know you to be cunning, ambitious, desperate, so I confidently brand you as a villain, and challenge you, even in the slight accusation I have made against you, to plead not guilty."

"Poor young man," said Rawlinson, "how sincerely I pity you; your poverty and your desperate situation blind your reason. I will prove myself even now your friend; I will return with you to Raven Castle, place you

in your position in life, urge your brother to make you a suitable allowance, and in any path of life you may select, do my utmost to clear any difficulties."

"And for ever hold Albert de Lancy indebted to you for only giving him one quarter of his rights, when, perhaps, the whole may come unsolicited. I have a word to say before we part; I see in your subterfuge, the coward's evasion; I will not, therefore, strike you, neither will I waste more words, when time to me is precious. Beware—there is no crime so well concealed, but that detection ultimately lays it bare;—there is a punishment on earth in one's conscience—the prelude to a greater one hereafter. Beware of me—my eye is for ever upon you—the never sleeping vigilance of the injured, hovers over you; return to my brother—your victim—and tell him this, if you have more courage in words than in deeds, that if he will but disclaim you, and do me justice, I will forgive him."

Rawlinson had gained his object,—it was

to avoid any personal conflict, for although stronger than his adversary, he was deficient in that courage which is almost always attendant on innocence; he now sought to slink away with credit, and at the last to leave a good impression behind him.

“ I regret the false view you have taken of my conduct; and, could I have imagined you as the deserter, I would have led those poor fellows in a contrary direction. From the despair which prompted you to exchange your dress, you must be deficient in resources, allow me to offer you this purse, it can be repaid when you are reconciled to your brother, to which end, I will use my utmost exertion.”

“ I will borrow that,” replied Albert, “ which shall be returned with interest. I could, from the character I have taken, seize it, and be no worse in the eye of the law than now. The sooner we part, the better—before long you will see me again; if you are sincere in your promise, I shall know it. Then, even I—insulted as I have been—driven from

my home, and forced into crime, may yet pardon you. Go !”

Rawlinson turned round to retrace his steps, and Albert, quite unconscious of the road, followed the first one until nearly day-dawn, when he struck across the fields, keeping aloof from all signs of habitation.

No sooner had Rawlinson got clear of his desperate enemy, than he rubbed his hands and began to turn in his mind the benefit to arise from the discovery. “I have him,” he said, “as a deserter—that is easily traced from the ship—the description, even the manners of the man, that must be ascertained and remembered. In the next place, he has committed a felony; and I, if it becomes necessary, may burthen my conscience with a slight accession of load, by adding an affidavit of theft. The purse and its contents, I could swear to for years to come;—now am I doubly safe—but to render me secure, Herbert must be found; and Laura Mackenzie shall be the means, cunning as she fancies herself, of persuading the old fool to return to Raven Castle.

How beautiful is this night! and yet how I long for the day; even that boy alarmed me. How true it is, that it requires three times the talent to be a rogue than it does to be an honest man. The one leads to respectability, and the other to the gallows. His words have struck me hard, for there was truth lurking in every sentence; but I will revenge them—I am the brother of Ronald de Lancy—his fortune is mine; and from the web which I have woven around him, no sudden leap can break through the entanglement.”

CHAPTER XIII.

" I WONDER," said Tom Snarling, as he stood at the helm of the Spitfire, " where the devil we are bound to now ? That captain of ours is grown as steady as a pump bolt, and speaks as little as a quaker in action ; he cautiously avoids all strange sail ; and I think our chance of prize money is about as small, as a lawyer's chance of going to heaven."

" Well, and what then, ship-mate ? go where he will, all will follow him ;—he is as brave as a lion, and as generous as a young girl of seventeen. What course are you steering ?"

" About E.N.E. ; she lies a little higher every now and then, and orders are left to steer that course if the wind becomes fair."

“ It’s cold, Tom; devilish cold, after the West Indies, and some of our mongrel crew will soon begin to squeak, if Jack Frost nips them a bit; I thought that dark Spaniard was inclined to give his tongue a little too much license yesterday, when the captain refused to board that craft we spoke.”

“ That Spaniard’s a devil in duck trowsers. I never shall forget the last game at Monte I ever played with him; I won some doubloons that night, but they only got me into mischief; I won them in a church, and a precious noise we got up. I tell you, my old ship-mate, that if a man plays cards in a church, the devil always cuts the pack, although some say he never claps his cloven foot inside the door.”

“ He’s got a pair of wings, Tom, and his body is so elastic that he can twist himself through a key hole; of course, he would not put his foot on the stones, it would give him a chilblain for life. Lord love you, Tom; he never puts his foot on anything that’s not red hot, and eats nothing

but capsicoms and red pepper, mixed in Chili vinegar. I heard all about him from a priest who came to give me a passport when I was so nearly kicking the bucket with the yellow fever."

"He must have been precious intimate with the old gentleman," replied Tom, "and dined with him, no doubt."

"Tip us the stave, Tom, about that Spaniard and the pack of cards; a middle watch would not be worth keeping without a glass of grog and a yarn. How the little craft spins through the water; there never was one built who could creep to windward of her; and when there is just wind enough to make her stagger under her topsail, I should like to see the frigate who could touch her."

The Spitfire was a Yankee built schooner: low, long, and sneaking. She was the finest model ever launched; the head of her main mast raked so much, that it plombed the taff-rail; her topsail was low and square, and she possessed a succession of jibs, which were

assorted to the weather. She was painted black, with a narrow red streak, and on her stern was written, "The Jonathan Dobbs, of Baltimore." Her trade was not of the most legitimate order; and, occasionally, her bills of lading comprehended the cargoes of other vessels with which she had fortunately encountered.

In the piracy thus practiced, no blood was ever shed;—the captain of the Spitfire was a rare compound of clemency—honour—dishonour—fierceness—meekness; he had as many different ingredients as are found in the manufacture of punch—the sweet and the sour—the strong and the weak. His crew, formerly ruthless ruffians, had become tractable sailors, from the discipline enforced. Every man knew his station; and although each could have sacrificed his ship-mate to the law of any country, few quarrels and fewer recriminations took place. The plan adopted was usually this:—on the discovery of a strange sail, of which the Spitfire went in chase, and ascertained to be a merchantman, a long piece of

canvass, painted white, and with port holes in black, was fastened over the side, and covered the red streak; whilst another, with the "Fancy of Liverpool," written in large letters, was hung over the stern, and obscured the "Jonathan Dobbs." Of these last, as well as of the former, there were several sets, and the name, like that of the play actor, underwent a variety of changes; but with the crew, she had but one name, "The Spitfire;" and she was christened as such, long after her launch, in consequence of her sailing one night in the Mediterranean, when such was the highly phosphorescent state of the water through which she cleared her way with uncommon rapidity, that she seemed to emit fire from her bows.

The Spitfire had no established resting-place, she was the real cosmopolite. If her success was great, and her hold well stowed, she invariably steered to the port, or some port in the same country, to which the vessel she had robbed was destined, sold the cargo, and made sail to another far distant country. The

vessel plundered, was lightened entirely of her cargo, her papers, bills of lading, and so forth ; and having no object to attain in prosecuting her voyage, most generally returned to her owners, with a full and particular account of the pirate—which the very appearance of the vessel the next day would have contradicted. In all transactions of this kind, no face was ever visible ; every man wore a black mask, and although, when under the command of another, blood was not unfrequently spilt, yet under the present captain, not a drop had ever flowed.

When she appeared off the coast of Wales, she had no cargo on board ; she was trimmed to her best point of sailing ; she had avoided all strange sail, and, although occasionally chased by frigates and men-of-war of all descriptions, from her rakish and suspicious appearance, she soon crept away, and when night came on, altered her course, and escaped.

“ The yarn,” began Tom, “ occurred whilst another commanded us ; and he was a chap

who cared no more about human blood than an alligator ; he was as covetous as he was miserly ; and he lost his life by the men, who, had he been as this man, would have been protected and loved. We had been some time hovering off Antigua and Guadaloupe, and we had captured a few vessels ; they were sent to our stow hole (that is the cargoes, for the craft were always destroyed) in one of the Tortuga Islands. Although all hands were pretty well pleased with the cruize, the captain was dissatisfied ; he had reckoned upon more ; but had he captured every ship which had sailed from France or England, his greedy, avaricious mind would never have been satisfied.

“ Discontented, moreover, nay savage—he one day when he came on deck, as we were standing under easy sail to the northward on the star-board tack—ordered the mate to tack, make sail, and run down to the coast of La Guyra. In this town, he had several men in his employ—men who gave information of vessels in Puerto Cavallo, or of expected vessels in La

Guyra: when the information arrived, we generally put to sea. The roadstead of La Guyra is very unsafe, owing to the rollers, as they are called—a kind of ground swell—which sweep to the shore, previous to a coming breeze;—a vessel weighing with the rollers, coming in, would in all probability be wrecked; and when the breeze does come, it would be difficult to creep off the shore; besides, if an English man of war came to the same anchorage, it might have been disagreeable.

“ The vessel—she was then called, the San Francisco—was kept in the offing, whilst the captain went on shore. The coast is high; and on the summit of one of the hills, we had erected a small flag staff: whenever the signal was hoisted, we stood in, and sent a boat; but if a ball was shown—at night, a transparent one, by day, a white one,—it was a signal to keep in the offing. We arrived the following morning; and the captain, as usual, went on shore. He said, in a sulky manner, as he went over the side, ‘ keep a good look out to leeward—but stand in shore, about five o’clock, and

keep your eyes on the signal post—shove off forward,’ he continued, ‘ I have forgotten my money !’ and jumping on deck, went below to a secret place in his cabin, and returned with a bag of dubloons. I know the chink of gold as well as a gambler ; for many’s the time I have handled that beautiful coin.

“ Now, there was not a man fore and aft the craft, who did not say, “ there’s something in the wind, or that bag of gold never would have gone over the side of the St Francisco—but to have been shipped either to Spain or England.” We all began pondering about this event—tacked the craft, and hove to with her head off shore ; at five o’clock we were close in, and the signal was flying to keep off: at dark the same signal was up, and therefore we kept out to sea for the night.

“ Two days elapsed, before we saw the signal up for the boat : it was sent, and the captain came on board with an empty bag, but in a very good humour. He brought with him a young creature dressed up in boy’s clothes. At first sight, we saw it was a girl of about seven-

teen, very pretty, and very bashful; indeed it was her blush betrayed her, when one of the crew, a good looking fellow, caught her in his arms, and lifted her on deck. She went down in the cabin, and the captain wrote down some signals; but as the vessel was rolling about, the young lady in pantaloons began to be qualmish and came on deck. Well, the good looking chap—that Spaniard, that the captain always talks to, took care of her, and lifting off her hat to cool her head, was convinced at once of the sex, from the long black hair. He was always kind to a woman; and somehow he got struck all of a heap with this creature. There’s a freemasonry in love; and I’m blessed if they did not exchange more signals, than the captain wrote down that blessed day!—never were a pair better assorted; the man was dark and handsome, with a pair of mustachios, on the ends of which, you might have hung a tin pot by the handle; he had the finest set of teeth I ever saw; and his figure was that of a man—not your thin wasted wasp-like fop—but a kind of a figure which denoted strength and activity;

whilst his eye—it is not dimmed now—was the sharpest and the clearest I ever beheld. Now, she, as far as I could overhaul her in her disguise, was the neatest little figure imaginable. I judged mostly from her foot and hand ; they were very small ; but her eyes ! there was a softness, and yet a quickness, about them I shall never forget ; and in spite of her rigging, it was easy to perceive that she was a woman grown.

“As these two got chattering and whispering together, they kept their eyes fixed upon each other, and I’m blessed if I did not say, those two will catch fire shortly, if they keep up such a fire from their top lights. But although Carlos was making love, he was sounding the girl, who, as she continued talking, did not take away her hand from that of Carlos. His ears seemed to stand out like a watch dog ; the whole of his countenance was lit up ; his lips curled with a sort of savage ferocity, and the motion of his unemployed hand was that of a man, grasping at something which seemed to elude his clutch. There were forty of us on board, and we stood like

statues, watching Carlos and the girl; but although we all spoke the language well, yet we could not catch a sound excepting—‘ my father—I leave you to protect his—you swear it.’ — ‘ By Santa Maria I swear it !’ said Carlos. He heard the captain coming up the hatch way, and immediately made a remark about sea sickness;—the paper was put into her hand;—the boat was again manned—and the captain himself landed her.

“ The devil a question could we get Carlos to answer; and he had the impertinence to say, he never discovered it was a girl, although he supported her, with his hand round her waist, and held the other pretty firmly. .

“ We now filled, and stood along the coast, until we came to a village; we stood in shore as close as we could, and were not a little surprised at finding the captain perched on the top sail yard with a glass, looking with an earnestness, he never had done before, especially on a village, and to our fancy, a very dirty one. In the evening, we stood back again to La Guyra, and picked up a boat, in which was the

same young gentleman who had been on board in the morning. The captain got into his boat, which, after pulling some distance for the schooner, laid upon her oars. Carlos had now full time to talk to the girl, and she seemed overjoyed at his attention ; but whatever passed between them, we never knew, excepting that it was quite clear they both had grown very fond of each other, and that whatever was in the wind, Carlos knew all about it ; when the captain returned, we stood out to sea. One or two vessels passed close to us, but we took no notice of them ; but on Thursday following, we made all sail towards the coast again, and made the land, just about the village before dark—we then shortened sail, and when darkness came on, for there was no moon, we stood close in, and picked up two boats. Carlos knew all about this, for as we stood in, he fixed himself on the starboard bow, and suddenly called out when he saw the boats—" Here they are, Sir."—In the first boat, was the same girl, and two men ; in the second, only two men ;

but all were armed. Our own boat was now hoisted out; and every man but three were ordered in—we were all well armed, and carried small sacks made of stout canvass—we crept silently to the shore, and landed in a smooth part of the beach.

“There was before us a church, which almost faced the landing place; to this, with the greatest silence, we proceeded. One of the Spaniards unlocked the door, and for the first time in my life, I stood armed in such a place. I was not more frightened than my neighbours; but as I paced up the aisle, and heard the footsteps of my companions trampling on the pavement, I felt a chill; I felt a fear come over me, I had never before experienced. The doors closed heavily upon us—the key turned in the lock, and thirty seven of us heard the noise, and startled at it—men who had dared the laws of every country—whose hands were all more or less tinged with blood—whose lives had been one day of crime—and crime which required courage. How was it, that we felt this fear, this boyish fear, as if the dead could come from the cold

damp vault beneath us, and rebuke us for our sacrilege.

“ ‘ You may speak now,’ said the girl, who was close to Carlos ; ‘ and if you like it, you can have a light—you will have to remain an hour or two ; but as we must be careful not to let the gleam be seen, we can come down into the vault.’

“ I never felt as I did then ; to think of going down amongst the dead !—the innocent, they say, can sleep in a church ; faith, I am satisfied I could not close my eyes.

“ The girl, who now cared little to disguise her sex, struck a light ;—she threw down some cigars, and from a basket which she carried, she took out a bottle or two of brandy—a pack of cards, and a small lantern. ‘ Make yourselves comfortable,’ she said, ‘ I must remain at the church door,’ Carlos went with her ; and we, borrowing courage from each other, assisted a little by the brandy, began to feel more easy. But why we had been brought here, was yet a secret. The captain was absent, and our gaoler, apparently, was a girl of seventeen ; still no one

murmured. The light but rendered our situation less enviable ; we saw the spider, the only tenant of the dull cold mansion, and well had it worked ; for over the damp walls it had spun its gossamer web. The vault being arched over head, it made the sound of a voice more hollow ; in the corner, in which the feeble light threw an indistinct ray, were two coffins ; and when one of our party first saw them, he turned as pale as a sheet, as he said : ‘ look there,’ his hand trembled like a leaf, and had we not been men inured to sights of horror—we should have run from the vault and escaped. And after all, what is there to shock one in the sight of a coffin ? nothing ; but we were in a church defiling the holy sanctuary of the dead—disturbing their repose, and for what ?—to commit some crime for which perhaps blood would be shed, to step from the threshold of religion, into the very vortex of sin.

“ The fear occasioned by the discovery of the coffin soon passed. One of our crew, the most hardened of us all, and who little thought how soon he would be placed in a damper dungeon,

rallied us on our fears ; he lifted the upper coffin, and placed it on its end, whilst the other, which was smaller, and lighter, he pulled from its resting place, and having brought it to the centre of the vault, he opened the door of the lantern, and putting his hand in his pocket, brought out some dollars. ‘ Now,’ said he, ‘ here we are for an hour—plenty of brandy—a pack of cards—a good table, and lots of lights. I’ll keep the bank, and here it is,’ as he said this, he dashed the dollars on the coffin, and the sound reverberated through the church.

“ It was a relief to our mind to do anything ; occupation was what we most needed ; we had all examined our pistols and our swords—and but for this idea, we must have remained in idleness, conjuring up spectres—making spider’s webs into ghosts, until fear might so have overcome us, that we should have been unable to have faced any desperate service. We now got round the coffin—some on their knees—others sitting, whilst the rest stood over, and betted their money ; and in this manner the game began. It was Monte—a game you

know well, and every man who has been in South America has seen thousands of times. At first we played in silence—Spaniards seldom speak if they lose ; or if they win, they maintain the same countenance for twenty doubloons, as they do for a dollar ; they never rejoice at success, or repine at misfortune. But we had amongst us, some Frenchmen, fellows who never ceased chattering, and who made as much noise about losing a dollar, as if they had been tossed by a bull, and fallen into a pond, just deep enough to drown them if they laid quiet. They soon made the church ring with the riot, and this brought Carlos and the girl to the vault. Carlos was a desperate gambler, and his soul thirsted to be amongst us. Love kept him back for a moment—but that moment was soon to pass. He had now thoroughly gleaned the secret from the girl who would not quit his side.

“ It appears that every now and then, there was what is called a Fiesta given in this village—a place near which a river emptied itself into the sea—and where, free from alligators or

sharks, as the water was too shallow for those voracious creatures to venture therein, it was customary to bathe. This in certain times of the year, brought together many of the wealthy ; and here the gaming table literally groaned with gold. The captain had, from his spies, heard of this Fiesta being about to take place—and as there was no account given of vessels likely to arrive, he planned with his accomplices the attack upon these tables, and by way of reconnoitring the place, he went there the first night, and played deeply. He cared little if he won or lost, as he counted upon a sure return in a few days. He lost—but his countenance remained unchanged, he then walked about in several of the open places where booths had been erected ; and here, to the sound of various kinds of music, the women were dancing the graceful cachucha—or slowly turning in the waltz, as they varied its numerous figures—one of the spies, the father of the girl, who had tumbled in love, at first sight, with Carlos, had some property in the place, and this, of course, it was agreed should be untouched ; and it

afterwards occurred to us all, that the expression which we overheard, concerning the girl's father, was in reference to this money.

“ Every avenue leading to or from the village, was well ascertained ; but there was no place which afforded shelter and concealment to forty armed men, so convenient, or so secure as the church. The man who kept the keys, was either bought, or made drunk ; and the keys thus came into the hands of our party. The girl was, from her innocent appearance, the one selected to convey all intelligence ; and hence, as frequently happens, the mask of modesty and virtue, was employed to cover abandonment and vice. The captain having made himself master of the situation of the richest tables, and the best mode of attacking them, loaded us as I have described, every one well armed, and every one carrying a small canvass bag—and popped us in the church.

“ The game continued—sometimes as fortune varied, the bank being successful, and sometimes its gold and silver stock gradually diminishing. At last, it grew towards midnight ;

and Carlos, who had, in the church, availed himself of all he sought or desired, and satiated with the society of the girl, came into the vault, caring as little about the dead, over whom we played, as he did about the living, whom he left in tears, awaiting the arrival of the captain.

“ ‘Come,’ said I, as I saw Carlos enter, ‘every man in his turn; I’ll keep the bank now.’ It was agreed upon, and I emptied my pockets; declaring that I would stand twice or three times that sum—which I had on board. Carlos soon elbowed his way to the coffin; his greedy eyes were upon my money—and he staked his liberally. I won; and he, unlike any of his countrymen, betrayed considerable anger; he blasphemed fortune, and called upon the dead to witness that no one was half so unfortunate as himself. His companions looked on in silence; the play was entirely between him and myself. The vault re-echoed with his curses; and although the girl came and implored him to be more quiet and return to her, he only grew the

more impetuous. He drank largely of brandy, but it had no effect upon his brain.

“ It was now midnight—which one of the crew mentioned — adding, that a church at that hour was generally inhabited by the dead, who walked about the long aisles, or sat listlessly on the chairs. The girl heard voices, and warned the crew that the captain was approaching. ‘ Once more,’ said Carlos, ‘ my all—here—on board—my share of to-night’s plunder.’ I agreed, and dealt the cards. The first, was a nine—the second, the four of clubs—which last card, you know, has always been with us called the devil’s bedpost.

“ ‘ I’m for the four,’ said Carlos; ‘ and as the devil and I have always been friends, I’ll back it with all I have.’ I turned the pack over, and began to take the cards from the bottom. His eyes were close to the pack—I drew the cards cautiously down, and the nine won. In his fury, he jumped upon the coffin, cursing all around him. The lid gave way—and the pale face of the corpse appeared to us all! Can I ever forget that moment?

A rush was made, and the other coffin was upset, from which rolled the body of a man; his beard had grown since his death, and never do I remember to have seen so horrid a sight !

“ My money fell upon the corpse of the woman ; and, accustomed as I was to the dead, I did not dare touch it. We all, excepting Carlos, endeavoured to gain the door of the church ; but from the time he remained below, and the noise of money which we heard, we all thought Carlos recovered his losses, and from the corpse stole a golden heart. He would, could he have made money by it, have severed the heads, and walked away with them, one under each arm.”

“ And how did the attack prosper ?”

“ Well,—but, as I told you, the captain lost his life, and by the hand of Carlos. When he summoned us to the attack, the fresh air—the removal from the vault—the distance from the dead—all inspired us with courage. The boats were ordered round to another point nearer the village, which, as we passed, was

pointed out to us as the place to which we were to retreat, in the event of our meeting with any unexpected resistance. We were left concealed, for the moment, behind an empty booth, in which some of the early people had been dancing, and which was now deserted. The captain gave the signal at the moment the stakes were the heaviest; we made a rush—the players scampered away,—and the booty was soon in our bags. We cleared four tables, and all went on well; but, unfortunately, the father of the girl was seen by the captain to seize some of the spoil and take it to his house. As this was considered against the agreement, he ordered four of his men to follow him, whilst the rest, most unceremoniously, were employed emptying the pockets of every person they could meet.

“ The riot was at its height; a general shrieking of women carrying their children away from the village, added to the fears of those who were attacked; and our booty was most considerably increased by the plunder of some of the houses.

"In the meantime, Carlos had followed the four, who were to force the accomplice to relinquish his ill-gotten gains. At the threshold was the girl; she was now dressed in her proper clothes; her long hair floated over her shoulders, and her eyes sparkled like large stars in the darkest night. The captain seized hold of her rudely and put her aside; Carlos supported her. 'Now, lads,' said the captain, 'clear the house out.'

" 'Avast, there!' said Carlos, 'remember the agreement; this house is not to be touched; you pledged yourself to Francisca, and so have I.'

" 'By the saint at whose shrine we knelt in the church, when without the priest you made me your wife,' said the girl, 'protect us!'

" 'To the last,' said Carlos, 'fear not, my little one, the man who passes here must walk over my body.'

" 'Ruffian!—villain!—traitor!—mutineer!' cried the captain, 'this to your heart!' The blow was parried from Carlos, and struck the

girl, who Carlos believed was killed. It was returned, and the captain was a corpse.

“ ‘ Now lads,’ said Carlos, with the greatest coolness, ‘ now my wife is dead, I’ll take her dower from her father ;’ and walking into the house, he brought out every doubloon, and left the accomplice to mourn for the loss of his daughter and his money.”

CHAPTER XIV.

"I TELL you," said Rawlinson, as he addressed his proud son-in-law, "it must be done; Laura Mackenzie must be invited here. Through her we may secure Herbert; and by having him near us, we may soothe the old man. She maintains him; and through her alone can we reach Herbert."

"What an adventure, Rawlinson. I am lost in the numerous circumstances attending it. My brother, a deserter—nay, driven to commit a robbery—and I, the guilty cause. Look at me!—do I appear a man at peace with himself? Does all this wealth bring me nights of sleep and hours of happiness? The further I advance, the more I have to appre-

hend ; and the guilty man has not one moment free from uneasiness."

" Read your bible, Sir Ronald ; the greatest sinners invariably become the greatest saints. What is to be gained by any other course but contempt—abject poverty—the peacock stripped of his feathers, to be loathed, hated, despised. Come, come, Sir Ronald, I shall begin to distrust you—and then, if rogues fall out——"

" *Honest* men get their due. I must advance—I cannot retreat ; but I would fain relieve myself from some of my misgivings, by settling some permanent sum upon my brother."

" Settle him elsewhere ; settle him abroad, at the King's expense. Whilst he lives—whilst he can remain in this country, we hold our wealth with a very slender grasp. Besides, what he might spend, I can distribute amongst my creditors."

" What ! never satisfied ; the wealth of Croesus would be useless to supply your extravagance."

“Faith, that is not bad. I do not spend half of *our* fortune,—whilst you have to pension Blackburn and others, who know how to be discreet, even before a magistrate.”

“He could not injure me; I swore him to the fact that he could not identify the person who walked with Herbert.”

“Why endeavour to console yourself?—Herbert lives. If he speaks out, the corroborative testimony of Blackburn would be confirmation strong as holy writ.”

“In which you do not believe. I have a son—that binds me more to my crime—I would leave him heir to this princely estate; for when I and your daughter are gone, and some well paid flatterer of the dead tells of my virtue—my liberality—my justice—I would have my son inherit all the respect such a character inspires—without the shame attendant on the forgerer—the robber.”

“Pshaw! the best epitaph I ever heard was this :

“ Three lovelier babes you ne’er did see
Than God Almighty give to me ;
They was took ill of ague fits,
And here they lies—as dead as nits.”

Am I to tell my daughter to write to Laura Mackenzie ?”

“ If you say it must be so. But I dread the eye, even of a young girl ; I fear my own shadow ; and not a soul passes those great gates, but I feel as if the officers of justice were at hand.”

“ God bless me,” said Rawlinson, “ what a penitent man. Well, before I die, I’ll make a clean bosom—I’ll confess myself to myself,—and I shall be my own father confessor, and absolve myself of all sin, crime and improper thoughts.”

“ Do go, Rawlinson ; go and let your daughter invite Laura Mackenzie, and tell her to send some money ; leave me to myself—the only person, besides yourself, I would most gladly fly from.”

“ Books, books, Sir Ronald ; we must be friends, you know. By the bye, I’ll talk of

my own affairs another time. Good evening ; we shall see you, I suppose, at dinner."

" If the earth could open," said Sir Ronald to himself, as his associate withdrew, " and swallow up the whole world—omitting in its insatiate gulf that one man—there would be left enough of wickedness of thought—enough comprehensiveness of crime to demoralize the new generation, even were they as numerous as the ants which now inhabit the earth. He asks me to dinner in my own house—he thinks it hard he does not spend the half of my fortune—and, in every step I take, I can trace the watchful vigilance of this man. My wife, too, she clings to him more than to me. Oh that I could rid myself of this cursed birr—shake off this second self, from which I can no more escape than from my shadow."

" Write it directly, my child," said Rawlinson to his daughter ; " we shall be more secure, by securing her."

They were alone, in a small room which commanded a distant view of the sea ; there was a long telescope, mounted on a stand,

which stood upon the table near this window, and from words which escaped Lady de Lancy, her principal occupation was looking at any passing vessel, and killing time by avoiding, as far as possible, all thought of her situation. She had gleaned from her father, who, indeed, saw the necessity of intrusting her with some part of the secret, that her title was not the most secure; and that, under any circumstances, Albert must be kept away. It was now doubly requisite to intrust her more fully; through her, Rawlinson counted upon gaining all the requisite information, and the daughter implicitly followed his directions.

“ She is a nice girl, my dear,” he began, “ and a good companion for you. She will dissipate some of the gloom which hangs about you. Alone, you get fanciful, and, perhaps, fearful; but with another of your own sex, the rides, the walks, the house, will be less lonely—less melancholy.”

“ Heaven knows, my dear father, I would ten thousand times rather have wedded your clerk, and shared your house, than have be-

come a great lady, inclosed in a splendid prison. There is not a soul who visits here, excepting occasionally Mr. Molesworth; and when he christened young Ronald, he was as inquisitive as if he doubted my being its mother. He refused to have the ceremony performed but in the church—and kept his eye upon Sir Ronald as he passed his father's vault."

"Your fancy," replied her father. "People always become suspicious when they are burthened with a secret. Tell me, is your husband kind to you? Does that haughty manner unbend itself, occasionally? or is he ever the same thoughtful, reserved, melancholy creature, which, to me, he appears?"

"The same ever! we are married, it is true; but there is no confidence between us—I am here the lady of Raven Castle; yet I am as little heeded by the servants as a governess might be; those poor creatures, who are just inferior to their employers, and a shade above the servants, looked down upon by one party and not revered by the other. If I order

any thing, that order is not obeyed. My wish is communicated to Sir Ronald ; and under his direction, perhaps, it is gratified. But all my rides, my walks, my airings, are circumscribed. I must not approach the village ; and scarce dare venture to the cliffs. On my return I am not questioned as to my ride ; but every thing is gleaned from my servants. My own maid watches me ; and when I move from room to room I hear a door open behind me—or see one close before me. Father, I have become a wretch to save you.”

“ The duty of all good daughters. We are rich, instead of poor ; powerful, instead of subservient ; respected, instead of despised. We are in this life to shape our course according to the popular will and feeling : to be poor is to be criminal. Fear not, Margaret ; I will speak to Sir Ronald.”

“ Not for the world ! in marriage no third party, not even a father ought to interfere. It would render him worse ; whereas I hope, by an apparent cheerfulness, a mimicry of gladness when the heart is not glad, to win

him more to me. You have made me aware how treacherous is the foundation on which we stand : it shall be my care, as it is my interest, to strengthen it."

" Good girl, you have a laudable ambition, We are all in this life struggling to live : he plays his cards the best, who best succeeds ; and as at cards—some play a straight forward game, and perhaps win a little ; others by some trifling sleight of hand—not quite so honest perhaps, but much more adroit, become the winners of the larger stakes, and prosper. Life is only a pack of cards well managed ; they are in the wrappers of honesty ; but once uncovered, are the shufflers—and the cuts of existence. About this girl, this Laura Mackenzie, is she the simple, thoughtless, open girl she assumes to be ? or is she only disguising the cleverness of woman under that same wrapper of honesty."

" A poor country girl, I should say—without a spark of cunning, excepting that which your wicked sex affirm is born in us. A modest, pretty, young, unassuming creature, whose ab-

sence will be a release to her poor mother, and who here can be a companion and a friend."

"Remember, my object is to lure Herbert back; but of that we shall have sufficient time to speak. Mention, however, in your letter, your great joy at hearing from me that the good trusty old servant yet lives. Does your husband dine with us to-day?"

"I suppose so; but latterly he has become so absent in his manner, that to avoid suspicion he has dismissed the servants from the room, and not unfrequently forgets that he ought to be seated, but walks about, and never utters a word."

"The fellow is either mad or is a philosopher. Dispatch that letter to night. For the present, good bye! we meet again at dinner."

It was winter, and by five o'clock it was dark. When this hour came, Sir Ronald, wrapped in his cloak generally betook himself towards the cliff; and here, not unfrequently, he would stand, regardless of the cold wind, watching the waves, which for a moment chafed and sparkled on the shore, and then were

lost for ever. Here, gazing on the large mirror in which the skies were reflected, he was wont to hold converse with himself; to ponder over his past life; and endeavour to draw consolation from the resources of his own mind. What is a man, but a wave, that dances and bubbles for a moment, and then is washed from existence? Can any man remark the crowds of people which impede the progress in the streets, and not feel his own insignificance, when reflecting, that in a few brief years, every one now hustling through life, will be no more;—that the rising generation shall come and go as wave succeeds the wave—and that even the recollection of men's names shall die away, or only be recorded on a stone which man too often passes without a thought of eternity.

“To live,” said Sir Ronald, as he paused upon the brink of the steep cliff which overhung the shingly shore, “to live with the apprehension of death is dreadful; if from my mind I could blot out all recollection of the past, I could look forward to futurity as a blessing. Yet why think of that future which

may never be. The countless millions of animals and insects which live upon the earth, may, for aught we know, have the same hopes — the same fears : they congregate together ; they live together ; build their houses ; choose their governors, have certain laws and regulations which bind them to their different societies ; and, from their actions, they think. As I walked this day, I marked an ant which had discovered some food : it was too large for this insect to remove ; I saw it depart towards the nest, and on its way it met another ; the prey was then far distant ; they stopped, and evidently talked ; the last ant then left the tract it was pursuing and went direct to the prey ; there it remained until many—many came ; they then, with as much art as man could divine, carried the bulky morsel to their nest, there to preserve it until winter ! Are these creatures not rational, and if rational why not immortal ? But is man the only creature that treads this earth who is to enjoy futurity ? I think not, and if it is extended to all—there scarcely can be an eternity of punishment. Whenever I

read the sacred volumes, I tremble lest it should be so; when I consult my own reason and my own pride, I disbelieve it. The wicked, they say, are the only people who are entirely credulous; and they wish to disbelieve what they fear may be true. I am steeped in sin and cannot retract; I must go forward or die of shame. Oh, that I could feel but one moment of that happiness I have known ere I was acquainted with that devil who lured me into evil."

Thus pondered Sir Ronald, as he looked towards the sea. The cold night wind now warned him to return, and do the honours of his table; and with the haughty step peculiar to him, he began to retrace his path.

"Good evening to you, Sir Ronald," said a man who had long watched the Baronet. "You need not look over the cliff—for he can't come up again."

It was Blackburn, and the allusion was to Herbert. Sir Ronald took no notice but walked on.

"I want money for my secrecy, Sir Ro-

nald," said the man, as he walked by his side.

"How fellow! you dare not rob me!"

"No, nor push you over the cliff either,—but I dare speak out—and will. Do you think I am not going to gain by my knowledge? Be prudent: the world says you are wise: put a golden muzzle on the dog who might bite you. I want but little; and will have it."

"What have I to fear from you? to-morrow you shall leave your cottage; you shall no longer be a tenant or a labourer of mine; and I will save you these nightly walks, perhaps, to light other fires for the safe guidance of smugglers."

"Well, Sir Ronald, be it so! and to-morrow I will boldly tell how Herbert disappeared."

"He lives, fool! and is in Cornwall."

"Then, perhaps, he will say if I speak truth or not."

This answer, which so nearly corresponded with the reasoning of Rawlinson, led Sir Ronald to think that Blackburn had been tampered with.

"Fool!" said Sir Ronald, "do I not hold your own deposition, signed with your own hand, in which you swore you could not identify the man?"

"That's true enough, and what of that? I have already been believed a thief, a murderer—and now I shall get a better name and only be called a liar."

"I will give you some money, Blackburn, if you will answer me one question."

"Say its gold, and I'll answer any one you can ask."

"There, are you satisfied?" Blackburn nodded assent. "Now, tell me, when did you speak to Mr. Rawlinson last?"

"About two hours ago."

"And on what subject?"

"You only paid for the one question. I have enough money now—more would lead to suspicion; when this is expended, I will come to you and sell my information. Good night, Sir Ronald, I do not think I shall leave either your house, or your service to-morrow. Bless you, I am much too useful to some one else!"

The sturdy vagabond walked off, leaving Sir Ronald to wonder at the fellowship of crime, and how little confidence was to be placed in scoundrels. Then even Rawlinson desired more money, and in spite of long continued firmness of resolution, Sir Ronald at last gave way; he was then left to his pride and his books, with a sneering recommendation of Rawlinson to be very prudent and discreet, and to pay those who serve him well.

Two years had elapsed since the above scene took place; and, with the exception of an allowance paid to Blackburn, who never would answer any question at all, the parties continued much in the same situation. Rawlinson lived like a prince; his equipage was equal to Sir Ronald's; his business was totally neglected; and he travelled about as it suited his convenience;—but Herbert had not arrived nor had Laura accepted the invitation.

At the expiration of the above time, Lady de Lancy received the following letter.

“ Rose Cottage, near Truro.

“ My dear Lady de Lancy,

“ I have no words to thank you for your frequent pressing invitations, for I am borne down by grief and poverty. The great consolation in affliction is the pouring out of one's heart to another. It is now four months since my poor mother was taken suddenly ill : she never left her bed until last week, when she was removed to her last resting place. She is dead and buried ; and I am alone and almost friendless ! If she has left me no inheritance in wealth, she has left me that which surpasses wealth—she has taught me how to live and how to die. When, at the close of her long life, her respiration difficult, her utterance feeble, she became aware that the lamp was nearly out—her hours nearly completed. ‘ My child,’ she said, ‘ may He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, watch over you, guide and protect you ! my money will be your money, unless some unforeseen disaster robs you of it ; my reputation will be yours, to guard, to protect. You know best how I have lived, and

how calmly I die. Let not the poorer than yourself regret my loss; believe me, the hand that receives feels not half the gratification of that which bestows charity. To the great and rich, charity is a name; it means the giving of that which is of little value to the donor—and given as an obligation. True charity is that you will practise: you will rob yourself of a comfort to alleviate greater distress than you suffer; for a moment it may deprive you of a comfort; but at this hour it will return you your wealth ten thousand fold, for you will feel that your wealth is in heaven. I have more strength left than I had thought;—listen—you will soon be deprived of her, who watched your infancy—who was your companion, your friend, your mother. I have instructed you in religion—I have taught you, as I believe this moment may convince you, its value. I yield up my soul, not in confidence, but with a well-grounded hope of a glorious hereafter. I would have you follow, what I feel at this awful moment to be true;—of your wordly conduct be this your consolation, happi-

ness does not consist in riches ; it is engendered in the well-regulated mind, and is capable of being imparted to others. The lower order of people, who have ample employment, and enough to satisfy hunger, are far happier than the rich and great ; sigh not then for more than you have ; but be contented with that which has contented me. When I am removed, you had better change your residence for some time ; but never forget this humble home, or this hour, the last of my life, and the most useful of yours. Remember, child, you have no parent left to stand as a barrier between you and eternity ; all are swept away—and you must follow. To that last moment direct your mind when young, and God will not desert you when you are old. Now read my prayers—and I will follow the words with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength—place your hands to cover mine, and hold them up to my God as the last sign of my humble mind.’

“ I knelt by the bedside ; I took her hands ; I read—at first she followed audibly—her ut-

terance grew fainter and fainter; but the lips moved. I read to the end of our nightly prayer—and, as I slackened my grasp of her chilly hands, as I finished with—‘be with us now and for ever’—before I could say that last ‘amen,’ my mother was a corpse.—I cannot tell why I did not burst into tears, why I did not throw myself upon the body and kiss it; for I felt a calmness, a resignation, a power within me I had never felt—there was but one person in the room, and he was by our side, and knelt with us at that awful moment—it was Herbert—to him the shock of seeing one some years younger than himself die was great,—but he became my guardian and protector—he called in those who manage the last ceremony, he set up himself with the corpse, and I heard him pray, that his last hour might be like this when his mind was unburthened of the heavy secret it contained.

“I followed my mother to the grave, and before I had learnt even to believe she was not present, her brother sent a solicitor to claim the property. He said her will was a useless

document as it was illegal, and he wished me to leave it with him. At this moment Herbert interfered, and taking it from my hands, said : " I will keep it for Miss Laura ; if it is useless, you cannot require it." I was warned to quit the house within a month ; I have no adviser, no friend but yourself ; if now you would receive me, Sir Ronald might, by his advice, and your father's counsel, save me from irretrievable ruin, and you add an additional favor to many acts of kindness experienced by,

" Your's very truly,

" LAURA MACKENZIE."

Rawlinson was present when the letter arrived ; he clasped his hands with joy ; the poor destitute girl would apply to him ! and what was a young innocent creature in worldly wit and cunning, to oppose one who had all his life been a villain. Herbert, and the allusion to the secret, was a point of deeper interest, and after a conference with Sir Ronald, he returned to his daughter and dictated the following letter ; but he said : " All the part, my dear

Margaret, about death, and sorrow, and such like, you had better compose—women manage these things better than men; they are always so full of words, tears, sorrows, regrets, and such like; so just while I finish a bottle of the Baronet's claret do you begin the letter, and I will dictate the material part."

"Raven Castle.

"My dearest Laura,

"I cannot tell you how sincerely, how deeply, I am interested in your present melancholy situation. I joined in your tears, and I felt as deeply, and as sensibly, as one person could feel for another. These trials, my dear Laura, must be borne with fortitude, for it is useless to repine at what cannot be averted; but the loss of a parent, so good, so excellent as yours, is a blow hard to survive. I have read her last advice four times; I have learnt it by heart, and I already feel myself better for the instruction; her last words will ever be a consolation to you, whose mind resembles that of your most excellent and exemplary mother.

"That's quite enough of that stuff," said Rawlinson, "make a full stop and begin a new paragraph."

"It will give me the greatest pleasure, and satisfaction, to see you here, for as long a time, as it suits you to stay: I cannot but think you would sooner be restored to your usual serenity of mind, by an immediate absence from the place in which you have lately experienced so severe, so bitter a loss, and I hope and trust that I shall be able to alleviate your sufferings as I shall use my utmost efforts to that effect."

"There," said Rawlinson that's quite enough of that; make short paragraphs, and write a clear hand;—now go on.

"My father has desired me to say, that he will give his undivided attention to your affairs;—he fears that some deceit has been practised, but he pledges himself to unravel the mystery. He begs that the will may be kept in Herbert's possession who will be required to make oath, that it has not been out of his custody since your sainted mother's death—

and that as he will, of course, accompany you here, the affidavit can be made before Sir Ronald, as the document would be then given up. We are quite alone, and I shall make it a point not to see any company until you feel that a slight variation may contribute to your happiness."

"Now," continued Rawlinson, "give her a touch of your husband's partiality for her; to be sure he would as soon see the devil, as any thing black; and then finish your letter, as a composer does a tune, with the first part a little varied."

"My husband is most anxious to see you; although generally reserved upon all points, he could not be silent upon your affairs; he says he will assist my father in seeing justice done you; for he added, 'she was always a favorite of mine, and I loved to hear her sweet and beautiful voice.' I trust you will excuse my comparatively short letter, which I have written with much pain, as my feelings overcame me. But, my dearest Laura, pray believe me when I say, that I grieve for the loss you have

experienced as a sister. I feel for you as a friend, and I most anxiously await your arrival, that you may teach me, with your mother's instruction, to live a charitable and good life, that at the last I may meet my death with all the fortitude, all the hope of your excellent mother. Adieu, for the present, for the moment; do make haste and come to your very affectionate friend,

“ MARGARET DE LANCY.”

“ Shall I add a postscript about Herbert?”

“ No, child; the postscript of a woman's letter always embodies the most essential part. It will look as if Herbert was our greatest aim. Send the girl some money, and mention it now; it will look like delicacy, and yet be the most essential point. It's quite wonderful how you women string words together, and, generally speaking, how frivolous is the substance. But,” he continued as he emptied the bottle, “ a man, without he is a parson, never makes a good hand of a consolatory epistle.”

“ Do you ride before dinner, Margaret?”

said de Lancy as he entered; "pray do not disturb yourself, Rawlinson. Perhaps you would like another bottle of claret at your lunch?"

"Not to-day, my good son, or I should have called for it. Ride, Margaret; I have some papers to arrange, and some of those daily visitations which sicken the heart of man — 'bills to pay.' How I wish that gold could be drawn from the well, as easy as water."

"It does not give you much trouble," replied Sir Ronald, in his bitter manner, "either to find, or to draw it."

"And when I do, good son, I am sure you will be too happy to draw it for me."

The letter reached its destination by the post; and Laura thanked good fortune, that, in her distress, she had found some good friends willing to receive and assist her. Herbert was in the house, and heard the letter read; a smile passed over his face as he listened to the part relative to the will, but he made no remark.

"Come, good Herbert," said Laura; "let us leave this place of mourning--the sooner we go the better. At Raven Castle we shall find a home, and near it, if I prosper, I can find a future residence."

"No doubt of it, Miss, no doubt of it, Miss;—but I think you know more of friends than you do of dangers and difficulties. Excuse me, Miss, I am an old man—I once thought, a tried and a trustworthy one; but I found myself so much in the way at Raven Castle, that even the cliffs were too close to the house. I will never return there until Master Albert is the lord of the Manor."

"Alas, Herbert," replied Laura, "that will never be; there is now an heir to the estate, in young Ronald."

"And one before him," suddenly interrupted Herbert, "in Master Albert. Even if I die, what I have told you, is on paper, and I have no doubt that Mr. Molesworth would soon interfere. No, no, Miss; I will keep the will until I can get a solicitor, who I know will not let an hour elapse be-

fore he comes,—he knows all the business already,—and I am to keep possession until the new claimant can make good his claim. What! is it right for the shepherd to forsake his flock, and leave the wolf to seek his prey in security? Your maid will be sufficient protection for you ;—no Englishman would insult one so young, and one in such affliction! Here, without Mr. Law alters his mind, I stay; and if they get me out without a company of foot soldiers, or two-and-twenty constables, my name is not Old Herbert.”

At this important moment, Mr Law appeared. He was a short man with a bald head, neatly dressed, and with an eye as bright and as sparkling as a star. “This is the gentleman, Miss; you had better be guided by him, than by Mr. Rawlinson.”

The case was soon made known, which Herbert had the day previous endeavoured to explain.

“Show me the will,” said Mr. Law.

Laura read that part of the letter which alluded to its safe custody.

"Pooh!" went the little man, "what's the use of a will, if it's locked up in a drawer? It must be proved." Herbert at once offered it.

"Ah!" began Mr. Law, as he stuck his spectacles on, which made his eyes look brighter than before. "A bad case, I have no doubt; written with her own hand, and, consequently, some informalities—something confused—something irregular;—its very odd that ladies cannot consult men, whose business it is to protect them, to draw up a document which would make them easy when alive, and prevent disputes when they are dead. 'This is the last will and testament,' copied from a book, I suppose," said Mr. Law, in a low running bass voice, "'of Mary Mackenzie,' was your mother's name, Mary?"

"Yes," replied Laura, as the big tear started from her eye, and coursed rapidly down her face.

"Don't cry, my dear Miss Mackenzie," said Law; "I am aware of your heavy loss. I ask merely that I may see we are right as we pro-

ceed ; and believe me when I say, that to the orphan in affliction, Mr. Law never yet said a word, intentionally, to wound, or sent in a bill to plunder." He took her hand. "In me," he continued, "you will find a friend—not a pilferer ; a protector—not one to live upon your ruin. Excuse my manner, it may be rough, but it is not intentional, if I am rude either in remarks or in my manner ;" he gave Laura's hand a gentle squeeze, whilst old Herbert's voice was heard just above a whisper, "God bless him ; he's no more like an attorney, than I'm like a bishop."

"It's my nature—not my inclination."

"Let us see," he continued. "Ah, Mary Mackenzie—had she any other name?"

"None," said Laura, in a subdued voice.

"Good, so far. Humph, rather a bad hand for a copying clerk ; written when she must have been ill. 'I, Mary Mackenzie, being in sound health and vigor of mind,' ah, that ought to have come first, but, better late than never ; 'do thus dispose of all my property, real or personal, and of all I possess, in goods,

chattels, or of any kind of property whatsoever, which I may be possessed of at my death ;' terrible confusion, but not altogether unintelligible—strong minded woman, though. Pray don't cry, Miss Laura ; it hinders me from seeing through my spectacles. ' And I, Mary Mackenzie, do by this, my last will and testament, revoke, annul, and render void and of no effect, any previous will or testament and all letters, writings, sayings,' determined to have enough of it here, at any rate, ' which I might have formerly made, written, or spoken ; and this alone is to be my last will and testament ; I give and bequeath unto my dear daughter, Laura Mackenzie, all my property, real or personal, goods or chattels,' it ought to have been and, instead of, or ; it seems like a choice ; 'and to her, and to her alone, do I so bequeath it, and I further make her my sole executrix.' A curious concern surely ; but, perhaps, good enough. It is dated—three witnesses—ah !—well !—pity a lawyer did not make it. Women should never make their own wills—they so seldom know their own minds."

Having delivered himself of this pretty specimen of his knowledge of the fair sex, he looked over the will again, folded it up, placed it in his pocket, wiped his spectacles and cased them,—then stirring the fire and placing himself before it, began humming a tune, in a manner so perfectly absent, as rather to alarm Laura. Herbert stood in the corner, watching Mr. Law, but Mr. Law was quite insensible to the scrutiny. At last, he finished his tune, and then passing his hand before his forehead, began :—" I will be much obliged to you, Miss Mackenzie, if you will answer my questions, just ' yes,' or ' no ;' the fewer words, the easier they are remembered ; and long sentences, especially if they are confused, embarrass me." Laura looked at him, as much as to say, " Ask."

" Do you know if your mother ever made a will, with the exception of this one ?"

" Some time ago, my mother——"

Here she was interrupted by Mr. Law humming a tune ; she took the hint, and said, " Yes."

" Ah," said Law, " that's something like—short and sensible. When ?"

" About two years ago."

" About ; does that mean more, or less ?"

Laura recollected herself, and then said :
" It is two years and one month, exactly ; that is within a day or two—more or less."

Mr. Law smiled.

" Who was present ?"

" My uncle."

" Have you ever seen him since ?"

" No."

" You are are certain it was more than one year past."

" Certain."

" Good bye ; go to Raven Castle ;—no, stop—you are left sole executrix. You must come with me to London. Your servant will be with you,—be ready to-morrow. Herbert, come here ; now mind what I say ; you are to remain in this house, and mind you never leave it, so as to allow any one else to gain possession of it."

The next day Mr. Law came to the cot-

tage in his chariot. Laura and her maid took their seats, arrived in London, and drove to a brother of Mr. Law. The next day, it was found requisite to enter a caveat against the will before mentioned, which the uncle had put in; and, as now, the law's delays must be awaited, and Laura could be of no use in town, she started for and safely arrived at Raven Castle. She was received warmly by Margaret, who sighed for a companion to break through the long solitude to which she had been condemned. But Rawlinson, when he saw the prey had eluded his grasp, that Herbert was not in the slender retinue, became sulky and morose; even he was baffled by the foresight of an old man whom he had despised and feared. Sir Ronald was as cold and haughty as usual; he endeavoured, on seeing the deep mourning and the pale beautiful face beneath the sombre bonnet, to become somewhat more amiable, but it was a vain attempt—he could not overcome his nature,—and having made his speech of welcome, which would have frozen any unaccustomed person,

he withdrew to his own room, took down a musty volume, and set seriously to work to satisfy himself that, after death, there was a total annihilation, and that in this world—however deep the guilt—the punishment was the secret sting of conscience, and the constant fear of detection. Against this persuasion his sense revolted, but there were writers who had maintained the point; and if he could persuade himself to believe it—why he cared little about his former errors. It is a creed which excessive guilt alone can credit; and from the moment a man does believe it, he may be restrained from crime by the fear of the gallows, but never from the apprehension that the eye of an all-seeing Providence watches his ways and records his errors.

END OF VOL. I.

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THE
SPITFIRE,

A TALE OF THE SEA.

BY
CAPTAIN CHAMIER, R.N.

AUTHOR OF
"THE LIFE OF A SAILOR," "JACK ADAMS," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE SPITFIRE.

CHAPTER I.

"WELL, what's in the wind now, I wonder—vessel after vessel goes by us, without even a hail,—the little Spitfire is as much disguised, as a frigate would be if they turned her into a collier; and the captain keeps below, with that rough faced Carlos. I wonder, if this is the way he shows his gratitude for the death of the late captain?"

Snarling was interrupted in his remark to his own shipmate, by the appearance on deck of the captain. He was a young fair haired man about twenty six years of age; he was

followed by Carlos, who looked as most sailors do, when they come on deck at the compass, and then turning to the captain, he pointed to a hill, and asked "Is that the place?"

"Not far from it; about ten miles southward, do you see that small sharp pointed hillock, which seems to grow out of yonder large mountain—there just where the black cloud settles itself like a night-cap; we must land just about there—heave to," he said turning to the man who had charge of the watch—"heave to with her head off shore,"

It was about three o'clock;—the day—for it was in the month of December, was fast drawing to its close, and the night would be dark, for there was no moon;—the wind blew lightly along the coast, and the sun, which was drawing toward the horizon, indicated a continuance of the fair weather.

"All promises well," said the captain to Carlos. "I have no fears for the result;—we had better get our music arranged, you know the air—and your pronunciation of English

is quite good enough for a song—but you must mind to articulate as distinctly as possible. Let the boat be ready for hoisting out—Snarling, you will go with us, there is no man more trustworthy than yourself;—tell the cheif-mate to come down in my cabin.”

There was a vast anxiety in the crew to fathom the mystery; evidently something was about to be attempted, but no one could imagine the result. The boat was cleared, but there was no clashing of arms—no distribution of powder—no orders as to sharpening the cutlasses, and no general muster either to explain the purpose or inspect the muskets. There had been, during the unusual voyage, some slight murmuring as the deep laden merchant-man passed unheeded on her course;—but now each countenance was lighted up by the hope of plunder, and each man anticipated some great reward to crown the voyage. It was four o'clock, when the Spitfire filled, and under very easy sail, crept down along the coast; the captain was on deck, his eye constantly on the compass, and as often taking the bearings of

the small hillock. The day grew more to a close, the darkness gradually increased, and by the time the schooner was abreast of the desired point, it was dark.

“Look sharp, and get the boat out—stand in as close as you can—fear nothing, the coast is very bold, and you may run the jib boom on the rocks before the keel would strike ; you can distinguish the hillock still. Be careful, and call me when you fancy you are getting too close in ;—now, Carlos, quick !”

The very circumstance of the captain going below, when he appeared the only man who knew the coast, was odd, and excited some remarks ; but the crew could scarcely refrain from a desire of explanation, when they saw their commander apparently unarmed—dressed like a pedlar, carrying a small case, and with hair as black, and face as changed as a man in a mask ; Carlos carried under his arm a great coat, and a guitar, an instrument he played with great taste, and which was frequently in requisition on board the Spitfire, when the vessel was secure and the glass in motion. Both step-

ped over the side, without saying a word—Carlos took an oar, and Snarling was to pull the other ; the captain then gave his last orders, “ Put a false fire into the boat—a blue light, and a couple of pistols—keep the schooner close in shore, and when you see our false fire, or blue light, hoist a light, and look for us ;—if the pistol is fired—let the small boat be sent in the direction, and take care the men are armed.”

“ What time may we expect you, Sir,” asked the first mate.

“ Every moment,” answered the captain hastily ; “ take care there is no sleeping on the look out ; above all, that no light is seen from the schooner—no noise, no singing—but keep *close*, very *close* in shore, and mind the look out. There are no rocks, within ten miles of you, and I hope you will never be a mile and a half from this spot. Shove off, Snarling, mind you pull quietly and stealthily.”

The boat put off, and the oars were dipped silently in the water ;—she approached the shore, whilst the captain, who stood up,

steered her with astonishing accuracy to a narrow inlet, which even in the day time, might have puzzled the most cautious—"Lay your oars in—hush—not a word—although perhaps if you shouted, no one could hear you ;—yet we must not forget our practice, never to speak, when we venture on shore. Stay here, Snarling," he continued, "do not attempt to land, but be vigilant ; do not use those pistols without you are attacked, and that is unlikely ; but the report will reach my ears, and you will not be far from assistance. Now, Carlos, follow me close."—The captain then gave a look round, to ascertain the position, when turning to the right, he struck into a sort of ravine and cautiously ascended a narrow path. The darkness of the evening, rendered this a service of danger to Carlos ; but his leader seemed intimately acquainted with every turn and winding, and stepped quicker, as he advanced farther.

"Well done," he said, as he surmounted the difficulties, and stood on the summit of the cliff ; "mark this place well, Carlos ; you see a

hillock on either side; keep right between them, and you will come to this path; here you must await me, after you have done your work. No eye, not even ours can see the Spitfire; all seems to favour us—not twenty yards from this, we come upon a road, and you will know the turning by a broken stump, which serves to guide others to that path way—remember you may sing, but not speak as a foreigner; in these parts and these times you might attract much attention. But I need not caution you—excepting not to fall in love with any beauty, and take her to the schooner. Have you the paper I wrote?—

“ I have it here, Sir,” whispered Carlos.

“ What is the time?”

“ About six.”

“ Do you see a light a little on your right hand?”

“ It is from some house.”

“ That is the house to which you are to go—look at this paling attentively, mark this door, it leads to the house to which I am going. If you manage your business by half an hour,

you can remain any where between this and the hillocks ; if you are later, go at once to the top of the ravine, and keep yourself concealed—you will know me by my whistle;—now, go.”

Rawlinson was to dine at Raven Castle as usual, but the dinner hour was seven ; as was his custom, he busied himself in reviewing his affairs—in summing up his numerous debts, which his extravagance inflamed—in arranging plans for the future, which might arise from his deeds of the past. Whilst in the middle of his arithmetic, a time when the head should be clearest, and the mind least disturbed, he found himself humming an air, and became convinced that he was following the notes of a song, sung by a stranger near his gate. The voice was round and mellow, and the accompaniment beautifully correct ; it was a circumstance, so unusual, in so unfrequented a spot, that Rawlinson went to the door and listened. His servants were easily attracted by such harmony, and Carlos shortly had a very respectable audience.

"Come in here, my fine fellow," said Rawlinson, "and let us hear that song without feeling the cold air."

Carlos followed into the library, and there being placed close to the fire, he recommenced his song.

The ferret eyes of Rawlinson were fixed upon his companion. He saw before him a stout, brawny, dark man, evidently a foreigner; and at a time of general war, who could this man be? A prisoner attempting to escape? that was unlikely, for he was the wrong side of the country to get to France; still he was a suspicious character, and attorneys being always suspicious, he thought a little practice in his former acts highly desirable.

"Beautiful—beautiful!" exclaimed the cunning man, "I do not remember to have heard a finer voice—a more exquisite touch;—you must have had great practice on that instrument, which my countrymen seldom master?"

Carlos made a bow, but did not answer.

"Have you travelled far to-day?"

"Some distance."

"Not very far, I should imagine," continued the attorney, glancing at the boots of his visitor.

Carlos ran his fingers lightly over the strings, and seemed inclined to try another air.

"You are a foreigner," said Rawlinson, fixing his little eyes upon him; "a foreigner—and, I should say a Spaniard."

"You are quite right," instantly responded Carlos. "I have lived in England these fifteen years, and married an Englishwoman."

"That accounts for your speaking the language so well. But what are you doing in this part of the world?"

"Travelling about with my guitar, and living upon the generosity of those willing to assist one in distress, or from the liberality of others, who, like yourself, are good judges of music. Ah, Sir, when a man can appreciate music, I never strike this guitar in vain. Shall I sing you another song?" Rawlinson bowed,

and Carlos sang a wild kind of bolero, beating his guitar and sweeping its strings with wonderful execution. It was done—the vibration ceased as the Spaniard placed his hand upon the strings, and a momentary silence ensued.

“What occupation did you follow in London, or wherever you resided?”

“My wife dealt in fruits; I merely selected the cases of oranges,—for we Spaniards know well about that fruit. She died—her friends carried on the business, and soon left me to provide for myself.”

“The story is clear, and I have no doubt of the truth. Where did you sleep last night?”

“On the ground—beneath a shed; the straw afforded me a little warmth.”

“Poor fellow,” said Rawlinson, pretending to be much interested in him; “here is some money. You are the cleanest shaved man, for one who sleeps in the open sheds and begs his bread, or earns it by his talent, I ever remember to have seen. You must come with me; I am going to dine at the castle, here, and

after dinner your guitar and your voice will please the ladies, and contribute much to pass off a generally confounded heavy evening."

Carlos looked astonished. "My dress, Sir, is not sufficiently good to appear before ladies."

"Good enough for any purpose—come." Carlos began to place his guitar in the bag, and whilst Rawlinson crossed the room for his hat, and to extinguish a lamp that burnt at the further end, Carlos placed a parcel on the table and opened the door. Rawlinson was determined not to lose sight of his man, who he suspected to be a prisoner attempting his escape, he followed instantly, and closed the door behind him.

Carlos felt relieved—he had executed the only commission with which he was entrusted, and he cared little about the amusement for which he was destined. His astonishment, however, was great when he observed Rawlinson produce a key and open the door through which the captain had passed.

"This way," said Rawlinson, as he directed Carlos through the door, closed, and locked it. Carlos looked at it, and saying to himself, "Rather a high leap," walked on. He was led through winding shrubberies, in almost perfect darkness; and, although Carlos did not care one straw as to personal safety, he began to think that to thread this labyrinth of a dark night, was not the best mode of ascertaining how he was to retrace his steps. His half hour had already expired, and if his captain had failed in his unknown expedition, he might take the place of Carlos on the ground, and watch for him until he was tired of so doing. Pondering upon this, yet keeping his eyes as much to favour him hereafter as the darkness would admit, he kept close to his conductor, hummed a Spanish air, and gave a whistle now and then, just to keep the coast clear, and to give the captain a hint should he have lost his way, or, which was just as probable, not get out of it.

This feeling of insecurity increased as Carlos continued; at last, he came upon a stately

building ; it looked dark, dismal, dreary. It reminded him more of some of those secure prisons with which Spain was encumbered, than the residence of a private gentleman ; indeed, Carlos imagined he was likely to look through bars before he saw the sun again.

Rawlinson entered the house without the usual forms. He called a servant, and desired him to take the stranger below, to give him some dinner, and let him wait until he should be sent for. This was an order Carlos feared to disobey and yet was most unwilling to hear ; he could not have escaped the way he came, and he knew no other half as well. With the coolness for which his countrymen are so renowned, he followed the servant, and was soon in a spacious hall ; there, to his astonishment, he found his captain, who had opened his box of jewels, and was offering them for sale to the maids. Carlos took his guitar out of the case, and sat himself down, but neither party pretended to recognize the other.

“ I say, Mary,” said one of those delightful nuisances, a footman, “ what would you give

for that ere foreigneering fellow's whiskers, to make into a brush to dust the furniture with?" John was a wag, and a favorite; the maids tittered and looked at Carlos, whose large dark eyes seemed to give a little satisfaction to the maids.

"Well," said Mary, "he's a good looking man enough; I suppose he's a great man in a little distress," and she gave him another look. "Why, he has teeth as white as snow and as regular as tea-cups at breakfast."

"I say, Monsieur," said John, "can't you twiddle-de-dee that rum looking fiddle of yours, and sing us a song; I'll give you" (and here he made a sign no freemason could misunderstand, for he put his fore-finger of his right hand into his mouth, and beat the depository of all food with his left) "mungey—mungey, old boy. D——n me if he has not got whiskers on his upper lip as long as the tom cat's."

The maids burst into a shout of laughter, and the captain, who professed to be a wandering Jew, volunteered to speak to him, if

he could speak any language ever heard between Constantinople and the coast of America.

"How came you here?" he asked in Spanish.

"Your red-headed friend brought me here."

"If I go out first, I will wait at the gate through which we shall both go. If you go first, stay within sound of the whistle. Is it done?"

"I have left it for him; he will not know of it until he returns."

"He says he is a Spaniard, wrecked on the coast below, and is the only man saved; his guitar was washed on shore when the vessel went to pieces, and he is begging his way to London."

"Lord!" said Mary, who was a comely girl, "I'll give him sixpence; I kept it in my pocket this four months, and turned it every new moon for luck." As Carlos took it, he gently pressed her finger.

"He's the best looking man I've seen for this year and a half, any how. I wonder,

John, how you would look with all that hair on your face?"

"Look," said John, "very much like a man who wanted to be shaved, and was afraid of turning the edge of the razor. Come, Israel Levi," he continued, "none of the maids will buy your good things, but I should like to have that brooch; what's the price?"

"That is a diamond of great worth."

"Oh, I say," said John, "that's coming it rather strong—a piece of glass stuffed into a hole, and made fast with a copper rim."

"It's as fine a diamond, as ever your mistress wore; and if she saw it, she would buy it."

"It would do to fasten the child's cloak," said Mary, "when it walks out on Sunday."

"How old is the child?" asked the Jew rather hastily.

Carlos gently touched his guitar—it brought his captain to his senses.

"Two years and a half, and is as fine a boy as ever was."

"Breeched," interrupted John, "and if you and Israel Ben Levi Mordecai had to look forward to this estate as our own, I don't think you would wander about of a winter's night, or I clean boots and shoes."

"I vow I'll tell my mistress of all these fine things, perhaps she might like some of them; so don't go, Mr. Jew, if you please until I return."

"Is the sack for your guitar large enough to conceal the child," said the Jew to the Spaniard.

"Quite, if I can see it!"

"Make love to the maid, and try. Poor fellow," said the Jew, "he says he has no clothes but what he has on—that he slept in them last night, but that he will sing you a song if you like."

"Oh deary me, yes," said Mary, and this gave her an opportunity of looking at Carlos. His large intelligent eyes met hers—his appeared abashed, and he looked down—a blush gently suffused Mary's cheek, Carlos looked up and saw it—she averted her head—her

face was as red as the inside of a mullet's gills.

Carlos sighed gently, he touched the guitar with great delicacy, and sung a Spanish song ; each verse seemed more and more tender, until the last, which was sung with great warmth and expression."

" I wish I knew what it was all about," said Mary.

" It is this," replied the Jew ; " a Spanish noble, apparently in distress, goes into an inn, and out of charity is fed—the hand which offers him this assistance, is the hand of the maid, and she is beautiful ;—the nobleman becomes in love with her, but she at first disdains his poverty, not knowing of his birth ;—he becomes melancholy, and never leaves the neighbourhood—she sees his passion for her is the cause, she relents and marries him—he becomes pleased with the idea that he is loved for himself, not for his wealth—and he takes her from the altar in a splendid carriage to his castle."

" How pretty," said Mary, " and how softly

he sung it, poor dear fellow ; who knows that he is not a lord in disguise ?”

“Mary,” said John, “it’s a young woman with a barber’s shop on her face. Curse that bell, I really think ever since that girl Laura has been here—that she thinks they are musical bells, and plays upon them, to amuse herself.”

The Jew’s face had undergone a wonderful change, he looked like a painted corpse, and Carlos seeing it, struck off at once with a bolero, and drew the eyes of Mary upon the handsome performer ;—this time the voice was deep and sonorous.

“That’s no woman, master John, I’ll be sworn.” The bell rang again, and John giving a very splendid curse, trotted up stairs. The Jew turned to the fire place, and taking out a pencil and a piece of paper, he employed himself in writing, and Carlos advancing, took Mary’s hand and gently kissed it.

“If he is not a lord a frolicking, there’s no cobwebs in the cellar,” said Mary to herself. She kept her eyes towards the door, and Carlos kept his lips to her hand ; a noise was heard, and Carlos as quickly sang another verse.

"Here Mordecai Levi, you and your diamonds are wanted up stairs, so shoulder your pedlar's box, and see if you can persuade Missus, and her black companion that they are worth buying; and remember you should always pay the pike that stands on a good road, and gets you along smoothly. I swore they were diamonds taken out of the King of Spain's turban—and out of the buckles of the shoes the grand Turk wears on state occasions." The Jew put his hand in his pocket, and gave John a large coin—it was a Spanish dollar.

The captain followed John to the drawing room, in which was seated Rawlinson, Lady de Lancy, and Laura Mackenzie; the last looked more beautiful than ever, her fine features and snowy skin, were seen to more advantage from the dark outline which enveloped them. She raised her eyes as the Jew advanced, and he thought a slight flush rather suffused the cheeks.

"Pray, Mr. Jew," said Rawlinson, "how came you in this out of the way place to sell diamonds?"

"I was informed," said the Jew, in a voice so deep, that even John, (who lingered, as listening folks are prone to do,) thought the Jew, his self-named Israel Ben Levi Mordecai, must have caught cold in coming through the hall, "by the landlord of the Ship Inn, at the town that I should find this castle, and likewise ladies, to whom such trinkets as these are valuable."

"Let's look at them," said the attorney; "what do you call this thing?"

"Ah, mine Got!" said the Jew, "your excellency knows at once the most valuable jewel of the casket. This is the very jewel with which Montezuma fastened on his plume of feathers, the morning he was killed; it was then, as you see it now, a clasped brooch; but the setting has been altered by Francesco de Paula, the celebrated jeweller, of the Calle Plateros, in Mexico; it's virgin gold; there is no alloy; and you may test it on this stone."

"I know nothing of virgin gold, and testing stones," replied the attorney, "I want to know the price, and I should like to know, if the

question is not impertinent, how you came by this gem, of such rare value?"

"I could not sell it under one hundred and sixty guineas; it is given away at that price. I came by it thus: the maître d'hôtel of Ferdinand wished to realize some money, by the sale of this jewel, and as I had often dealt with him and given him the highest prices, he offered it to me, at the price I now ask. I gave it, and afterwards went to Mexico, there I learnt from a jeweller, who had seen, when very young, this jewel, that it was of immense value, from the circumstance of its having been the property of Montezuma. I returned to England, offered it for sale; but as I have no proofs of its being the same jewel described, I lowered my price to the one I now ask, and which is not even the value of the stone."

"You are a bold man to walk about with so much property on your back."

"It is a little hazardous. Allow me, Miss, to offer you this ring; it is of pure gold, and the blue stone will look the better for its being on that delicate hand; that ring has a strange

anecdote attached to it. It was given by a lady, to a suitor, of a moment; he was obliged to fly from his home, and in despair of not seeing the object of his sudden love again, he obtained from her this ring; it was promised that when that ring was shown, the lover should be supposed to be present, and secrecy observed. It will exactly fit *your* finger; the ring was never to be returned but by the person himself. The promise, you see, was never kept; for the ring is now mine, and I offer it to you."

Laura had for some time studied the appearance of the Jew; she saw, or thought she saw, that the large beard and dark whiskers were false, for some lighter hair was visible, and the Jew's face looked younger, and it was coloured.

"Ah, Madam," he continued, addressing Lady de Lancy, "see this necklace; examine it well, it is beautiful, beautiful; but it is false; not all the jewels we see are of the purest water; remark how exquisitely it is set; this ring will become you."

Laura looked at the ring, whilst Margaret and Rawlinson were busy examining the necklace. It was her own ; the one she had given Albert after the ceremony of de Lancy's marriage with Margaret ; the Jew's eyes caught her's, he leant over the table across the seat in which Laura was placed, and whilst, with the left hand, he pointed out some marks by which the false jewels might be detected, he dropped a small note into Laura's lap.

Oh, woman, woman ! inexplicable woman, at once the simplest, and the deepest ! at once the most prying and most secret ! at once burning with passion and with love, and yet the calmest and most collected !—Laura saw the note and enveloped it in her pocket-handkerchief, whilst the Jew, in order to cover any confusion, which might be visible, continued his discourse.

"The necklace," he continued, "is like some fair and beautiful woman ; made fairer in appearance by the meretricious ornaments of dress, or the exalted situation of her life ; probe her heart thus, and she is as worthless as

this ;" he touched a spring which unloosed the setting, and showed the astonished observer it was only paste. " Well, well, Miss, you do not like to possess this ring, then I will keep it, and perhaps I may again find the man who *lost* it."

" And you *found* it, I suppose, much about the place where it was lost," said Rawlinson.

" Just so," replied the Jew.

" Come, Laura," said Lady de Lancy, " do not look so miserable, child. I will give you any thing you like to fancy, providing, indeed, it be not Montezuma's clasp, that I cannot afford ; but for the rest, you may choose."

" You must not choose the false jewels ; they are bad companions, and one day or another are certain of detection. I would not sell you this ; I keep it to show how dexterously art may imitate nature, and how the most worthless may appear the most brilliant."

" Did you," asked Rawlinson, " from your own knowledge of this, invent the necklace ?"

" No," replied the Jew carelessly, " it was

pawned by an attorney's daughter, and was the work of the father."

A dead silence ensued, even Rawlinson was confounded, and Lady de Lancy rose suddenly from the table; Laura alone appeared calm and collected, for the attorney, who felt the sting, rose to speak to his child; they retired some way from the table; the Jew busied himself in replacing the imitation jewels, and, as he managed to get close to Laura, he said in an under voice: "Where is Herbert?"

Laura was afraid to answer, for Lady de Lancy approached; the colour which before bloomed on her face was gone, and she looked paler than Laura; she, however, attempted to conceal any emotion, and sat down whilst Rawlinson went to warn his son in law that dinner was nearly ready, and he himself hungry; he had not felt the sting beyond the moment, he was as callous at the heart, as the gardener's palm is to the nettle.

"Choose, Laura, my dear, I see your eyes are fixed upon these baubles."

"I'll choose when I return, Lady de Lancy;

but let me run up stairs for a moment ;” she soon returned with her purse, from which she took some money. The Jew perceived a small piece of paper which was put forward, evidently that he should see it, and was left carelessly upon the table ; it was soon transferred to his pocket, and he read in Laura’s eyes some satisfaction that it had been so dexterously obtained.

“ Will you have the ring, Laura, which the Jew mentioned as a lover’s gift ?”

“ I am a strange hawker of rich goods and have my fancies ; that ring I will not sell, it will do as a present to one who will prize it more when she knows her lover’s sincerity. Poor boy ! he wanders about like one of our scouted tribe in Russia, cheated by the nation which attempts to shelter him. Ah, ah ! Peter the Great knew his subjects well, when he said : ‘ No Jew could make a fortune in his dominions.’ ”

“ Have you been in Russia, also ?” asked Laura, “ if so you must have seen all countries.”

“No, never, Miss—but I have traversed seas to be rich, for I cannot be powerful without riches. Your servant called me Israel Ben Levi Mordecai—it was meant as a reproach; but the day will come, when this despised Jew, will be envied by a monarch. I have paced the streets of Madrid—I have landed on the barren coast of Africa—I have wandered over Mexico—there is not a state in America, which has not seen the Jew. I have passed unobserved in Paris—I am known in Vienna—in London—in Edinburgh—in Dublin and at Raven Castle.”

“Away with this trumpery,” said Sir Ronald as he entered, “or at least wait until the voracity of your father’s appetite is appeased. Dinner is announced—come, Laura, take my arm; in the evening, we will examine the pedlar’s basket, and if you are disposed to purchase—”

“Or I to present,” said Lady de Lancy.

“You shall have your taste gratified; take the Jew to the servants’ hall, and give him

what he requires to eat." The Jew bowed lowly, as that ill-used tribe are accustomed to do; they have felt in this country the severity of the law which prohibits their being recognized even as subjects—and Israel Ben Levi Mordecai was a Jew.

John stayed to drop him a hint that he had given him a coin of which he did not know the value.

"It is a pedlar dollar," said the Jew; "it will pass any where, from America to Constantinople."

"I'd rather have a trinket for Mary, or an English shilling."

"Give it me," said the Jew, "English money I have none. But the trinket you can have."

"Then how the devil do you manage to pay at the inns?"

"Ask no questions, John; serve your master well at dinner; and if you feed me well, I will repay you."

Carlos had made considerable advances in

the affections of Mary. The child had been shewn, but it was now in bed, and there was no hope of seeing it again.

In vain Laura Mackenzie endeavoured to appear as usual; she felt a giddiness and unwillingness to eat; she was silent, reserved, and frightened; it was attributed to the sudden manner of Sir Ronald de Lancy;—but she had recognized Albert in the Jew, or one of his associates, who did his will, and did it cautiously. She was, all dinner time, endeavouring to recal the features of the discarded brother. She had not seen him twenty times in her life, and the disguise was so effective, that she was unable to pronounce the Jew her lover.

“Why, Laura, you do not eat as usual,” said Lady de Lancy; “you are not ill, child, I hope?”

“No,” replied the girl, “not ill, but not so well as I have been. I missed my ride, to-day, and I have been moping over Mr. Law’s correspondence, afraid to awake myself to the hope he inspires.”

“ Never mind Mr. Law, my dear,” said Rawlinson, “ if he fails, I will try.” Rawlinson had closely inspected Law’s letters. It appeared that the honest solicitor had great hopes of success. Although the will was a little informal, yet the desire of the testator was so evident, that the judge would, in all probability, find the last will a good and valid document. Rawlinson was forty-five years of age, his wife had long been dead, and his conscience, although deadened, did occasionally, on a winter’s night, become a very disagreeable companion; he thought that Laura Mackenzie might just suit him as a wife. She was seven-and-twenty years younger than himself; mild, docile, timid, just the girl to be his companion, without being impertinently inquisitive. He began to view her with better eyes, ever since the arrival of Law’s first communication, in which he learnt that property, to some very fair amount, might become hers, providing the mother’s will stood; for the uncle, who had persuaded the mother to make a will in his favour, had done it under

the solemn promise that all his property should descend to his niece at his death, that she should live with him in affluence, and become an heiress hereafter. Some suspicion crossed the mother's mind, that her daughter never liked her uncle; and to give her the opportunity of refusing to live with him, she left her the property by a second will. Law's letter informed Laura that the whole of the uncle's property was entailed, and in the event of his having no children, which was unlikely, for he had been married more than twenty years without any, the whole of his estates would revert to her. No sooner did Rawlinson read this, than he altered his manner towards Laura. He became most kind and considerate, framed the answers to Law's letters, inquiring on the most vital points, such as by whose will the uncle inherited the property, and thereby giving himself a clue to the discovery at any future period. Laura was obliged to be present with him often, and the attorney did not despair of success, if he

carefully sapped away any prejudice, by long and continued kindness;—and who is there that long and continued kindness will not win?—only her whose first love has never been crossed—only her who has that picture engraven on her heart, which, at every beat, pictures him to her eyes

CHAPTER II.

THE dinner was over—the ladies retired. Rawlinson mentioned his conviction that the Spanish wanderer was a vagabond, under one act, and a suspicious character under another; but Sir Ronald, who was not over fond of his overbearing companion, paid little attention to the information, and the magistrate was lost in the haughty man.

No sooner was Laura in the drawing-room than she begged the Jew might be summoned. Again were the trinkets examined, and at last one was selected and bought by Laura; it required some time to fix upon the articles, and the Jew seemed anxious to prolong the discussion upon every fancy.

In the meantime, Carlos and Mary had become great friends—the child, who was going to bed, was carried down stairs, to hear the foreign man play the guitar, and sing, and Mary undertook the care of the heir to the de Lancy property, whilst the nursery maid imbibed her tea; Carlos played and jumped about like a child, carried on his amatory propensity, so far as to indulge in a kiss, which was only slightly rebuked, and during a moment of absence took up the young infant and most unceremoniously clapped it in his bag. A howl was commenced, but the bag was fastened, and Carlos in the act of departure, when Mary came in; she missed the child, and heard its cries. Carlos, finding himself detected, quietly drew out the half suffocated little creature, and laughingly gave the maid to understand that he had pouched the child instead of the guitar, which was then on the table.

Mary held her sides and laughed for five minutes, whilst Carlos attempted, by bows and signs, to express his sorrow at the oversight; the child however seemed to possess some

knowledge of friend and foe, for it roared like a little bull, and could not be comforted whilst the Spaniard's face was near.

"The devil take the little sulky brat," said Mary to herself; "here am I obliged to walk up stairs and lose two minutes with the handsome man; the long bearded Israel will be down soon;" so muttering this, not loud but deep, she trotted up stairs, and the heir of Raven Castle was in security.

"I was too quick," thought Carlos, "and yet it was my only chance; this girl is of no use but for to-morrow—then indeed the child might be got. But what's the use of the whelp? we have provision enough on board without this delicacy; and as for children, I can give the captain seven of mine, all of that age, when we return."

"The price, Sir, of the ring?" said Lady de Lancy who drew out a well filled purse.

"Oh! this, this is the ring which belonged to the unfortunate Anna Boleyn; it was sold at an immense price to my ancestor, who transmitted it to me. It has been in our family the gem of our casket, saving Montezuma's

clasp, for more than one hundred and twenty years. Remark the setting of it, how old; how valuable; I cannot sell it, small as it looks, under ten pounds."

"Oh, good Lady de Lancy, do not spend so much money on me. I will not allow you so to do. I merely selected this, thinking it the cheapest; but who could have imagined so curious a looking ring ever graced the finger of that unfortunate woman! I should never feel happy with it; and always fancy some ill betided me by possessing so unlucky a relic. I will not have it."

"But I insist upon it, Laura dear; you do not, I hope, estimate my love by my present; if so, I would give you this wondrous clasp."

"Not so, I assure you; the most trivial gift which friendship bestows is dearer to me than all the extravagance of an unwelcome hand. I will have this hair chain, it is neatly platted."

"That will not ruin my Lady—there," said the Jew; "it is worth but little, although the head from which it was cut, would be worth ten thousand times the value to one family in this

country. It is cut from the head of one who should have been rich, but who is now a wanderer and an outcast. Take it, fair lady, I will sell it for two shillings."

"I prefer it to the ring, said Laura," her face crimsoning with a blush, "and I will have this in preference to the locket, for the person who lost the hair was much in my own situation."

"Then you shall have the locket, to hang to it, and in it I will place some of my own hair."

"'Tis a thing of trifling value ; but it is strange it has already some of the same hair neatly placed therein to show how well the locket may look when thus filled." The Jew looked close to the locket and touching a spring he showed it to Lady de Lancy.

"Oh it is exquisite ; look at it, Laura."

"If you come this side, fair lady, you will see it better." Laura came round, the Jew opened the locket and she expressed her wonder at the neat manner the hair was inserted. The Jew shut it and rubbed it on a glove to brighten the gold. "You see, fair lady, how small it is, and yet," said he, "it may contain enough to remind a lady of

her truest love and admirer ;" he opened it again, Laura gave a sudden start, and a loud 'hah' escaped her.

"What is the wonder, my dear! let me see."

"Nothing; but holding it slant ways to the light you observe that the ground work is interlaid with gold;" he opened it again, but Lady de Lancy could see no difference.

"You have seen all it contains, fair lady," said the Jew, addressing Laura, "will you have it now?"

Laura remained silent for some time, she was endeavouring to collect her firmness which the uncomfortable heat of her face convinced her was acting the coward, and blushing for her.

"Let me advise you to take it, Laura, it is very neat and very handsome."

Her hand trembled as she took it, her face, which before was flushed, was now pale as death, and she advanced nearer the Jew; he gave it her himself, a sudden firmness seemed to reassure her, she passed the hair chain round her neck, and the Jew with a peculiar officious-

ness clasped it behind saying, "The portrait has not the beard."

Rawlinson and Sir Ronald now entered. The first was anxious for Laura to accept the ring and the clasp. He was half drunk, very familiar, and uncommonly generous, like all men in that delightful state between gentle inebriation and positive drunkenness, when the head is rich in ideas, and the tongue too confined to give them utterance; but Laura refused them all, and seemed ill at ease as the familiarity increased; the Jew too seemed more attentive to their words than to the sale of his articles; whilst Sir Ronald gravely remarked, that throughout even a written testimony of the gravest order, there was so much doubt of the truth, that he wondered how any man could offer money for an article unsupported by any evidence of its originality, but oral tradition, mouthed from an itinerant vendor.

"Have you a hawker's license, sirrah?" continued the magistrate.

"I have, Sir; and my name is on the canvass which covers my pack."

"You may go," continued the Baronet, "and I hope I may never see you again."

"I have a boon to crave, good Sir," said the Jew advancing; "the lady kept me in the house until this late hour, and I am fearful to walk along the almost deserted road, on this dark night with so much property."

"Why you long bearded scoundrel," interrupted Rawlinson, "you do not want to sleep in the drawing room, do you?"

"I want only," replied the Jew, with much earnestness, "to leave the jewels here to-night."

"Not an unreasonable request," said Lady de Lancy.

"Leave them, and begone," said Sir Ronald.

"I will lock them in the drawers in my room," said Laura. "You had better lock the box."

"It has no lock; but fastens with this secret spring." He again took his pencil and wrote a few words, which he said was the account of the things sold, for which he would be answerable to his brother, and closed the box; he then bowed to each, and withdrew.

"Now let us have the Spanish singer," said Rawlinson.

"The what?" said Sir Ronald.

"I know *what*," carelessly replied the attorney, ringing the bell.

"Tell that Spaniard to come here with his guitar," said Rawlinson, to the servant.

John made no reply but went on his errand, whilst Sir Ronald rose with his usual stately walk, and hinted that his house was not his own, but that his library perhaps might be less subject to interruption, and where he could read without the interruption of Spanish vagrants and—

"Cursed intruding fathers," added Rawlinson.

"The Spaniard's gone, Sir," said John.

"Gone!" said Rawlinson.

"Yes, Sir, the Jew and him entered into some conversation; the Spaniard put his guitar in the sack, and walked out."

"Why did you not tell him to stay?"

"He could not speak a word of English, Sir."

"Speak," said Rawlinson, "why he spoke to me for half an hour before dinner."

"Did he, Sir? then I think I had better tell Watson to count the silver over."

There was one person who saw through this—it was Laura Mackenzie.

CHAPTER III.

"WHY did you burn the blue light," said the Captain, as he ascended the side of the Spitfire. "I told you to hoist a signal light," if any man of war was in the offing we should be chased. Quick, get the boat in, and make sail to the northern, the weather has clouded over, and the glass seems to play us false to night. Carlos, as you value my friendship and esteem, never mention a word of this night's work."

"What sail are we to carry, Sir?"

"All she will bear ; take no notice of any strangers. We are much too close in shore, and we may be hemmed in by the cruisers on the Irish coast, and those on the Scotch shore."

It was not long before the Spitfire was under

her canvass, she seemed to run through the water without the slightest opposition from it, whilst the bubbles which passed her side, and which are generally the indication of fast sailing hardly appeared. She was like a hunted thief, stealing stealthily and noiselessly along.

“There is a vessel on the larboard bow—she is standing towards us I think.”

“My glass. Here, take this cursed beard and throw it below; it has done its duty well to-night, when perhaps we may all want a disguise.” The glass was brought, the vessel appeared to be a rakish brig, and was in all probability a cruiser. The Spitfire was standing out to sea, whilst the vessel now nearing them seemed inclined to hem her in and prevent her escape.

“Keep her well full,” said the captain, as he stepped down the companion, “and let every thing be ready for action; but show no lights;” it scarcely appeared a moment before the Captain returned on deck, dressed in his usual careless seaman’s attire. His men who now saw before them enough to cause the liveliest

apprehensions, seemed to gather courage from the steady manner of their leader. "It is a *cruiser*," he said as he surveyed her, "attracted by the blue light, perhaps it is better as it is, than to have stumbled unprepared upon her."

"If we tack now," said the mate, "we can creep in shore, and under the land might escape her."

"And the wind might baffle us, and we might be placed in a situation from which we cannot escape. Have the hands on deck; if she fires, back the fore top-sail directly. My lads," he continued to his crew, "a little of our usual coolness, and in half an hour we shall lose sight of our unknown companion. I intend to run past her, and before she is about, the Spitfire will be quite far enough away this dark night, to effect an escape without firing her guns."

Carlos now came on deck and took the wheel; it was his station at quarters: a cooler, steadier man in danger never breathed. It was this great requisite in a helmsman that made him his Captain's favorite.

“Keep her well full and bye;” said the Captain, “we must pass to windward of her.”

It was not long before the brig fired a shot which passed over the Spitfire, and hoisted a light at her peak, below the ensign.

“What colours shall we hoist?” asked the mate.

“Any you like,” replied the Captain; “for if they were French, Dutch, Turkish or English, no one could distinguish them, this dark night; back the fore top-sail, keep the helm a mid-ships, and stand by to fill the fore top-sail, directly I answer her hail.”

The brig, seeing the schooner apparently hove to, instantly shortened sail, the courses were hauled up, the top-gallant sails furled, the main top-sail backed; this reduction of sail was done in good style; the brig was evidently a man of war in high discipline; and Carlos who seldom spoke, quietly remarked—“We shall soon see how long it will take you to wear and make sail.” The Spitfire having the weather gage, edged down a little on the brig, intending to make sail directly she had answered the hail,

the wind was increasing fast, and the top-sail, which had been braced aback, was lowered and close reefed ; the clouds were getting up, and the night promised first to begin with a little rain, and to finish by a gale at S. W. It was about ten o'clock, and the moon did not rise before one in the morning ; about this time the Captain of the Spitfire calculated the wind would increase to a gale.

The time which elapsed between the firing of the gun and the hail, was not unprofitably spent on board the schooner ; the fore and aft sails were reduced a reef, and the jib which was too large for the breeze, was shifted to one of smaller dimensions ; every thing was well and safely secured. It never occurred to the Captain, that a gun might be wanted ; the Spitfire's strength was in her sailing ; there she was without a rival ; she had tried her rate against every description of vessel, and not one could near her ; she might have been mistaken for the Flying Dutchman, if she had ever rounded the Cape.

On approaching the brig, she was hailed in

English ; the answer was, " the Amelia of Liverpool, going to the Clyde, for a cargo." The low, long, sneaking hull, the immense spread of canvass, the height of the mast, their rake, the whole cut of the Spitfire, were so suspicious, that she was ordered to wear, and heave to, on the same tack as the brig, as it was the Captain of the brig's intention to board her.

" Aye, aye, Sir," responded the Jew Captain ; the vessels passed each other ; " fill the fore-top sail," was heard, " keep her rap full, Carlos, let the watch below go to bed, and call me if the wind freshens." The Spitfire soon gathered way, there was no sign of wearing to heave to, and she had already increased her distance, and was creeping away from the brig, before that vessel made any signs of pursuit.

To fill and tack, would have been to have lost sight of the Spitfire—to wear, a great loss of ground ; the latter was preferred ; and as the brig got before the wind, she fired two or three guns at the schooner, which had so easily and dexterously deceived her ; the shot went a

long way past the Spitfire, but in so bad a direction, that Carlos coolly asked the mate, if he thought the Englishman was firing at the clouds, to make way for the moon. The schooner could have carried more sail, but the Captain never pressed her with canvass—burying a vessel, from the over-crowding of sail, was held by him, to retard, rather than advance a sharp built craft; it was already evident, that the pursuit was useless. The brig was scarcely perceptible with a naked eye, and although she kept firing her bow guns with just as bad a direction as before, there was no sign of her pursuers obeying the order to wear and heave to.

“They had better save their powder,” said Carlos; “the shots don’t come half way; and if it was not for the flash, nobody would know where she was.”

An hour had passed,—the Spitfire had not only weathered, but had fore-reached. The chase might be considered as over, when another vessel was reported. The Captain was on deck in a moment; it was a frigate, under as

much sail as she could stagger, crowding up to the vessel, from which the guns were fired. To have tacked, would have been suspicious, for by the night glass it was evident the frigate had seen the schooner. The breeze was freshening fast, and in a severe breeze, with a head sea, the frigate might be a dangerous adversary. The Captain took no notice of the danger : he desired a light to be shown forward, and edged down ; he even shortened sail, feeling quite confident, that with the reduction he had made, the vessel astern would not gain upon him : the large speaking trumpet, he held in his hand.

The frigate, perceiving the inclination of the approaching vessel to speak her, never suspected her of being the one chased ; she luffed close up, deadened her way, and as the Spitfire passed rapidly by, she hailed the frigate, and said, "there is a French lugger privateer in shore of me." The Spitfire passed, and as the Captain of the frigate, said, "thank you, thank you," some words such as these, fell from a person on board the schooner, "that is the Doris."

A suspicion was created, from the appearance of the Spitfire, that she was the privateer; but the English, in which the communication was made, was so pure, so evidently from the mouth of a countryman, that the suspicion evaporated.

"That's just like life," said Carlos; "the very man sets two friends to fight, and benefits by both; am I to keep her full and bye?"

"Send a hand to relieve Carlos," said the Captain; "we are safe now; those gentlemen will make signals, and heave to, and go on board one another, whilst we shall be far out of sight, before the moon gets up." Carlos was relieved, and the Captain desired him to come below.

It was evident that the Captain had not been in bed; his light had been concealed, so that no glare could be seen, but before him were small strips of paper, a chart, compasses, parallel rules, and those implements used in pricking off the ship's position on a chart.

"We have escaped, and escaped narrowly," said the Captain, "those two vessels, once outside

of them, I have no further fears ; but I cannot do as I could wish—bear up, and thus embarrass them in their pursuit. The most important service is yet to be performed ; I must call in at Campbelton, for a letter, and that letter will guide me for the future.”

“ The crew seemed discontented,” said Carlos ; “ they count that had we taken half the vessels we have seen, they would have been made comfortable for life.”

“ Made comfortable for a moment, and miserable for a year afterwards!—how many times have we filled their pockets and their hats with gold—gold sufficient to have bought respectability or honours?—there’s not a man on board the Spitfire, who could not have been an Italian Prince, or a German Count, if they pleased, and lived upon their fellow nobles by privateering on shore. But what have they done with their wealth ? gambled it away!—At the Fiesta of Medellin, near Vera Cruz, every man went on shore with his pockets crammed, and came back as empty as sieves, in which some fool has vainly attempted to preserve water.”

“ Some of us, Captain, buy jewels of great value, and lose them in an hour.”

“ No, Carlos ; those jewels are safer now than ever they were—they are mine at a moment’s notice, or hers, who I value more than myself. Of other matters—what did you get from the maid ?”

“ Nothing at all, but a kiss. I had the child in my guitar case, but was obliged to leave it behind.”

“ Excellent Carlos, my trusty friend ! the time will come when you shall be quietly seated either in your own or in another country, with money enough to buy a reputation, if our mode of life is a sacrifice of character.”

“ We are no worse than the Arab, or the Frenchman,” replied Carlos ; “ every man’s hand is against us—and ours is against them ;—they make war with the world—so do we, only, ours is unstained by blood, and they revel in it ; we are a small community—you are our king ; the mate, our prime-minister—and the rest, our populace.”

The mate was now heard on deck laughing most violently ; his voice could hardly articulate, " They're, at it again !—well done, little one ! try it again, big one !" It was a slight contest between the frigate and the brig ; they had both misunderstood the night signal, and a mistake had occurred ; it was evident from the flash and the hardly distinguished report that they were far astern. The Spitfire continued her unvaried course—she required no stratagem to elude her pursuers ; once out of gun-shot, the wind either light or strong fair or foul—no vessel yet could ever over-haul her. She kept up towards the entrance of the Clyde, carrying no particular press of sail—but slipping through the water at a quick rate.

At daylight, in the morning, no vessel was in sight but a merchantman to windward ; she passed unnoticed ; the only precaution taken, was to disguise the Spitfire—giving her the broad white streak, without ports, and hanging over the Jonathan Dobbs, the " Fanny of Liverpool."

The Spitfire might have been boarded by either brig or frigate, without fear of detection. She had a regular clearance from America—whilst had it been more convenient, so to have done, she could have shown a regular privateer's commission from the English government ;—she had papers enough to have passed twenty vessels, the only danger being the discovery of them. In this respect, her Captain was very cautious—every packet was kept separate—and when he intended to hail for an English vessel—not a paper of any description could have been found, but those which amply satisfied the searchers, that the Spitfire was a regular trader or a regular privateer ; but the Captain never liked Englishmen of war, and he avoided them more scrupulously than the navy of any other state.

At the expiration of four days—during which time a contrary wind had blown—the Spitfire arrived at sunset off Campbelton ; the boat was sent on shore, and in two hours returned with a letter, directed in a female hand, to the

Captain of the Spitfire, Campbelton, to be left at the post office, until called for.

“ Make sail,” said the captain; “ we can weather the north coast of Ireland, and we shall soon be in another climate. Now, my lads,” he continued, “ we will make war against all strangers, and before long, we will try the fortunes of the Spaniards at the Monté table.—I thank you all for having served me in a manner which no other men could have served me, and now you shall not blame me for negligence—or taunt me with fear.”

CHAPTER IV.

"I tell you," said Rawlinson, his face burning with rage and vexation, "that it must have been him. Do you doubt his hand writing?—read this :—

'When we parted, I told you I should watch you.—I am here now. Take back your coat; it is not much the worse for the absence—every thing is therein—but one letter—and that you shall have again.' "

Sir Ronald surveyed the letter—there was no doubt of the hand writing. But the Spaniard—he was a short, stout, dark-haired man; the other was dark, tall, slim : "it is easy to make a short man appear tall," said the Baronet, "but to make a tall man short, has never been effected."

"What, do you think of the Jew?—he was tall enough."

"Yes," said Sir Ronald coldly, "and much

too rich for our man. This letter he speaks of, what is that?"

"It must have been a letter I wrote to you. I quite forget its contents. But there is a difficulty still remaining, the sudden disappearance of the Spaniard with the Jew."

"Companionship, nothing more; both needed protection—we shall have the Jew here before long, to take away his jewels; you can then exercise your legal qualifications, by a sharp cross examination."

The morning passed; no Jew returned. The property, evidently of great value, remained under the care of Laura Mackenzie; and often had she touched the secret spring of the case, and examined its contents. The false necklace, like rouge on a woman's face, was easily detected in daylight; but the rest appeared stones of great value, the setting of which were all foreign. She sat down before them, examining her heart, which beat too forcibly to be questioned; she loved him—had loved him, from the first moment she had seen him, bearing his distress of mind, with all manliness, relinquishing as it were all claim to his proud

situation, wandering in a state of poverty—unknown—unheeded—and that without a murmur of revenge, against her who had betrayed him! Too deeply had she fostered the affection!—she loved him—the scorned—the outcast—the deserter, and above all, the perfectly inexplicable Jew, possessing wealth, more than sufficient to render him happy! These all concentrated in the Captain of the Spitfire—and what was the Spitfire? who had seen it? not a soul. The everlasting smugglers had seen the flashes of guns, and heard their distant reports; but what had Albert de Lancy to do with guns, whilst he wandered about, habited as a Jew? She took the locket, which hung suspended round her neck—the hair was his, and the portrait which had occasioned the blush, the living image of him:—by her acceptance of it, after she had seen it, she had accepted him. She felt that he would be justified in claiming her as a wife, and she in honour bound to yield herself up to him. She kissed the glass which covered the painting. How often do lovers commit this extravagance, and with as much fervour as ever votary em-

braced the golden saint; her eyes filled with tears—her heart beat quickly with emotion—her whole form trembled, and in that moment of love, her mother for the first time, was forgotten. A footstep warned her some one approached—the case closed as its lid fell—the locket was replaced—but her eyes—her eyes betrayed her!

“ You must learn, my dear Laura, to overcome your grief.” Laura started. “ I applaud your feeling, it is one which does credit to your heart; but we should follow the example of him, who wept when his son was ill, but got up, and eat when his death was announced. We must bear with patience what we cannot avoid. I have felt the loss of a mother, and I can now mingle your grief with mine.”

“ Your grief, Lady de Lancy.”

“ Cease, good Laura, cease that formal name! I would rather you knew me, and spoke to me, as Margaret. Your grief, time may dissipate; but mine remains unchanged—unchangeable!”

“ I thought you happy,” said Laura, “ happy in the love of a kind, affectionate, though somewhat cool and austere husband; how can

you be unhappy, when every luxury which is coveted, can be commanded ?”

“ You are wrong—the luxury of an easy conscience cannot be commanded—the eternal whisperings of a mind, ill at ease with itself, cannot be silenced—the blush of shame cannot be controlled.”

“ Can I do any thing, I, alas, who cannot control my own fears —my own grief ! I, poor as I am, dear Margaret, will do all I can to comfort, to console you.”

“ I feel,” said Lady de Lancy, “ the necessity of a companion, to whom I can in all confidence unburthen my mind ; and yet I dare not do it ; but there is one point which perhaps I may mention. Last night, Albert de Lancy was near Raven Castle—why does this agitate *you* ? why do you tremble at the name of him I once loved, and so shamefully betrayed ? keep still my heart—oh Laura, Laura, my poor heart will burst—that heart, which only loved *him* !”

“ Your husband, Margaret !—remember your

oath at the altar—remember the little child which lifts its tiny hands to you as to his God, when he prays at night; and in that remembrance forget him you have forsaken, and cling to him you have chosen. Remember Albert only as a brother, Sir Ronald ever as your husband.”

“ You speak, Laura, as if words could crush my feeling; you do not pour that balm which might overpower them. Our earliest love is never quite obliterated; we may live on, and share in many pleasures, and experience many sorrows; but in our first love, there is a root which never dies, and from it springs occasional remembrances of those early days when the heart worshipped but one object, and that object was its only love. His return alarms me—does he come back to chide me with my perfidy—does he return to show me the brother driven from his own roof—come, in the consciousness of his right, to turn me from beneath it!”—

“ You wander, Margaret, your fears of

meeting him make you conjure up phantoms ; how can he turn you from the house, which is your husband's inheritance ?”

Lady de Lancy stood with her eyes fixed upon Laura ; there was a total absence of mind ; it was evident she never saw the object before her, and she merely uttered in a distracted manner. “ He told my father, he would be ever near him ; do you think Laura,” she continued, starting back into thought, “ do you think there is an hereafter ?”

“ An hereafter ! as certain as we live we shall be judged, or who would live out this life of misery, if there was no hope of a future state ? the guilty endeavour to convince themselves there is none, whilst the virtuous and the honest look forward to it as their reward— but why this unusual question ?”

“ Sir Ronald is deep read in books, in those records of wisdom which ages have accumulated and transmitted to our time ; I have neither the coolness nor the reasoning to unravel the difficulties ; but he has satisfied himself, and would feign convince me that there is no punishment

for crime, no reward for honesty; he says that the enjoyment of life is its best reward; he points to the living beauties of the day, the change of the different seasons, that one succeeds the other, whilst the past is in oblivion; he shows me animals endued with sense, and, as he says, reason, who live and move and have their being, who die and who suffer this total annihilation."

"I cannot, dear Margaret, argue against those subtle reasoners but in one manner; I hold the scriptures as the words of truth, and as they promise, so I believe; let us change the subject; my flesh creeps upon my very bones at so horrible a contradiction to the gospels. Talk of any thing else but that."

"And yet," said Lady de Lancy, "I would I could believe it; I could bear the ills I have, as I have borne them; and could look to my grave as a spot, where no troubling thoughts, no stings of conscience could assail me. Laura, I am very miserable, very unhappy; I wish to die and yet fear the event."

"This, to me, is strange and surpasses my

understanding! how can a mother wish to leave its child, a wife her husband?—oh! if I were married, I think it must be a bitter day indeed, that could make me think of death; and if as in marriage, there must sometimes be some trivial disagreement, some momentary estrangement, how I should rejoice to fling myself upon my husband's arms and kiss away the lowering look perhaps my own remark occasioned!"

"We all think so, Laura, when we are young, ardent, enthusiastic; the painful reality of our useless existence, the natural discontent engrafted in us, the almost absolute necessity of change makes us uneasy in our mind and sometimes bitter in our manner. If I had never married I should have been far happier."

"That is because you feel you have married against your inclination—given your hand where your heart was absent;—time will relieve you of this burthen, and—"

"Never, Laura, never; the first beautiful dawn of day when in summer all looks gay around me, has ceased to gladden even my once romantic mind; the long shadows of evening

which cast a gloom over all that is springing into maturity, all that is blooming in nature, is more congenial to my spirits ; the darkness is my friend, I cannot bear the light of day. Time will only relieve me, when it carries me onwards to the farthest limit of life, for the miserable are ever long lived, and then shuts me from this hated world."

" And what can you have done to fear the day and court the night ?"

" Of myself, nothing, but the yielding of my hand in obedience, not to the command, but the wish of my father."

" That half exonerates you from the error: a daughter's choice, although not absolutely regulated by it, should be as much as possible in accordance with his opinion. I believe women in love see only with the eyes of love; the cooler person detects faults which to us are imperceptible ; besides which a parent may have insuperable objections to a particular family."

" At any rate, Laura, that last remark cannot be brought in to support your argument

here. I was told to give up Albert, because he was poor and dependent; to wed the other, because it would forward my father's views in having his daughter married to a man of wealth; why at the altar when my husband placed the ring upon my finger, it seemed not like the eagerness of one willing to clutch a prize, but as a criminal in former times touched the red hot iron to prove his innocence, the hand which touched mine was cold and languid, —the manner forced—constrained—the responses came from the mouth with as much indifference as a school boy repeats his well learned lesson, and when the last blessing was given and the ceremony over, he never even conducted me from the church, but left the father who gave me away, to return me as the mistress of the house."

" Still I see no cause for this inquietude ; if you still love Albert, it becomes a duty to wean yourself of such wrong affection."

" But what brings him here, like a thief in the night to enter his brother's house in disguise—nay even to attempt to steal my boy?"

“ Impossible, Margaret! your fears, arising solely from thwarted affection, make you run wild in your suppositions. Albert never touched your son—how could he when he remained in the room with us?”

“ Ah! how do you know that he, in the Jew’s disguise, was Albert, when the Spaniard below was the person who attempted the act?”

Laura, with all her candour, had yet a spice of the woman in her: she was not thus to be discovered without an attempt to screen herself.

“ I saw but one person, and that was the Jew; your conversation has been about the person we saw; how could I fancy it could have been any one else?—nay I will confess to you, for what object could I have in concealment, when you spoke of his having been present last night, I thought I traced some likeness to his features, even through the disguise—at least I think so now.”

The hurried manner, the confusion, the disjointed sentences, did not escape Lady de Lancy; the guilty are always suspicious; and yet

why suspect Laura?—because Rawlinson had mentioned to his daughter that, on the memorable night when his coat was forcibly exchanged, Albert was close to the cottage of Laura Mackenzie; that in the second affray when he eluded his pursuers, he ran actually from before the cottage; and that he recollected a scream from the window: now he appears again at Raven Castle when she is there, and when Herbert, if Herbert was his object, was absent; and indeed if his intelligence was so good, could he have been communicated with, without danger of discovery? To have pushed her now upon the subject was bad policy; she, in her own mind, was satisfied that Laura Mackenzie was aware of Albert's presence at the time he was there; she brought to her mind the sudden paleness, the hasty ejaculation at the production of the locket, and the words the wily Jew made use of, when he again offered it for sale;—her father perhaps would be the best judge in these matters, and to him she would refer.

“ Right Laura,” she began, “ I quite forgot we neither of us saw this Spaniard, who, it appears, pretended, in the servants’ hall, not to understand a word of English, and yet spoke to my father for some time fluently and well. I confess I should like him to return, for his singing would relieve me of some care. It is a curious adventure.”

Laura sat silent whilst Lady de Lancy ran on in a manner best calculated to throw her off her guard.

“ After all,” she continued, “ it might only be a fancy, a wish to see his brother, the old castle, and perhaps myself, who he may not have forgotten, and to whom he would now be reconciled ; young men are fond of this masquerading. I suppose we shall see him again at dinner time, in his proper costume, when he will reclaim those jewels which he left under your protection. Let me look at the locket.”

Laura trembled as she took the bauble from her neck ; it opened easily, and there was the lock of hair which, in colour, resembled Albert’s

and was widely different from the long black lanky locks which the night before concealed the features of the Jew. "It is curiously worked this locket, and I think of foreign manufacture." She took it to the window and turned it in all directions, examined if the case was double, if the reverse side had a hinge, but her examination was fruitless and she returned it saying, "It is scarcely worth your keeping, and I regret the present is too insignificant. I have another up stairs, dear Laura, one more worthy of you, and we can exchange this bauble; nay, do not refuse me, I own, yes, to my shame I own it, that I wish for something which was his to treasure near my heart."

Laura clasped the slender safeguard round her own neck, and merely said, "The remembrance would keep alive, that which should be forgotten."

CHAPTER V.

THE Spitfire weathered Innishowan head, and stood across the Turbot bank, which lies between Tory island, and the main. There were plenty of fishing boats employed in their usual avocation. The schooner hove to, and one boat which had just hauled her lines in, came alongside. The master of her was taken down below, and after the usual salutation, and the general request, and promise, in the following manner—"If your honor will give me a bottle of rum, I'll give you a mighty fine turbot for *nothing*," two letters were placed in his hand, and he promised by every saint, that ever was heard of in the blessed calender, not to *slape* a moment before he had put them into the post office.

The Spitfire filled, and made sail.

"No cruelty to-night, Carlos," said the Captain, as he addressed his constant companion; "remember, I will have no stealing girls from their parents, no violation of any laws, save those which acknowledged enemies practice. We have but this night, and then the vessel will be half-laden with plunder."

"We must begin by ten o'clock, Sir," said Carlos, "or otherwise we shall never be able to pass the Moro before day-break. These fools have no suspicions, and we shall easily succeed in making the guard drunk, and then proceeding to business."

The town of St. Jago de Cuba is situated some miles up a lake, the entrance to which is defended by a strong castle, called the Moro. The navigation is particularly difficult, for if the wind is treacherous, at the time the vessel arrives at the narrowest part, which is exactly opposite the Moro, there is no room to work in, and she must either put to sea or anchor. The fort is strong, from its position, and stronger from art; it is difficult to land under

it, and it is placed on such an eminence, that no other place can command it.

St. Jago de Cuba has long been the place famous for its growth of tobacco. Near this town, the whole country is cultivated to favor this production ; it is, when in a proper state, sent by mules to the Havanah, where it is manufactured into cigars. It is the staple commodity of St. Jago de Cuba, it is the means by which thousands live, and its return is in hard dollars. The mules which convey the stock of tobacco, bring back the money. The mountain passes are performed without fear, and the mules frequently arrive without any guard whatsoever, beyond the drivers, one of whom, is generally allowed to every ten mules.

These sagacious animals, although their sires are the emblems of folly, never will move a step, if the load is not placed quite even on their backs. They have a regular place in the line of march ; and when the leading animal begins its journey, the little bell, which is affixed to it, gives the signal, away they go, at

their measured pace, never stopping, and never altering their relative positions ; but should the burthen become displaced, from the motion of the mule, it instantly stops : the next mule passes it, leaving its space vacant, the driver adjusts the burthen, and the animal in feeling the load comfortably placed, trots off, and takes up its proper station. The tobacco had been sent to the Havanah, and the proprietors of the land expected every day the arrival of their mules. A fiesta generally follows, and what has been obtained from the earth, and the toil of the labour, is not unfrequently dissipated at the gaming table.

About half a mile off the town lay quietly at anchor a long low schooner ; she was painted with a narrow, bright, yellow streak below the port holes, (if port holes they were) and her object was, ostensibly, to dispose of sundry cases and casks of wine. On her stern, was "the Jean Baptiste, of Bordeaux," and in the perilous time of war she had threaded our numerous cruisers, and with a cargo, a very light one ; it is true, she had arrived at her destination ;

the authorities had visited her, her papers had been examined, and as all was quite regular, and satisfactory, the supercargo, a short, thick, set Spaniard, named Carlos, was frequently on shore, endeavouring to dispose of these articles. On several of the cases, the names of different vessels might be seen, and they were declared to be the better specimen, which had been re-shipped, from the vessels thereon named, at Martinique.

Carlos was in great demand; the batch of wine was excellent; the price moderate; the sale certain. The Jean Baptiste had been at anchor more than a week, and the many applicants for cases of wine, were occasionally kept waiting for some time, before they could be served. Carlos, who rejoiced in the name of a sovereign, Don Carlos, was on shore, idling his time with women, serenading those he admired, and playing at the Monte table; for every town, village, or hamlet, in the west, and under Spanish authority, has one of these gambling tables to which the high and the low, the rich and the poor, resort; not unfrequently, a

mule driver might be seen making one desperate *comp*, and risking every farthing he possessed, and either winning, or losing, walk out, without a smile of contentment, or a frown of displeasure. No man lost, with more apparent even temper than Don Carlos, and having shown himself at the heterogeneous resort, he generally finished his evenings, with some of the purchasers of his wines, all of whom seemed anxious for a continuance of his visits.

"I'll buy all the cargo," said one man, "at the price you have mentioned, and I'll pay you directly the mules arrive."

"You are a good customer and better man," said Carlos, "but the mules are not here, and those who purchase, pay ready money. I will trust you, for a case or two, and you may have them, moreover to-morrow, but as the schooner sails shortly, at least, directly, I have principally disposed of the cargo, and got the money. I should like to know, when these mules may arrive?"

"They will be here, the day after to-morrow

about ten o'clock at night, the rain may have made them later than usual, but we have letters from the Havanah, mentioning their departure."

"Good, good," said Carlos pondering; "but they may be plundered, and the guards killed."

"Plunder, forsooth, you might walk as covered with diamonds, as the sky with stars, and never lose one. Why we never have a guard, and we never lose a dollar!"

"Honest industry," said Carlos, "ever thrives. I wish I had been one of the mule drivers, rather than one of the players of Monte. I verily believe I have lost the value of half the cargo, this precious evening, and therefore am not the best of all companions. I could not sing a song without being too dull, to do it credit. Good night—*ponga me a los pies de las señoritas*"—so placing his sombrero on his head, he departed, murmuring a kind of song.

Carlos did not go on board that night; he walked about like a discontented man, and wandered round and round the miserable

town. There were some jewellers shops, which attracted his attention : then the guard house was surveyed ; the one which stood close by the landing place, could hardly be dignified as such, although beyond it, and within hail, was another which looked imposing. Having been disturbed in his cogitations, he took a more quiet stroll along the shores of the lake ; here and there were little nooks, where boats might be concealed, but the creeks were desolate ; not a noise could be heard, but the loud croak of the frog, or the sharp everlasting noise of the cricket. He again retraced his steps, after having walked some distance on the Havanah road. The night was dark, but he could see the distant hills through which the path led, and on turning suddenly to the left, he came down upon a narrow creek, which branched off from the lake ; he walked to the end of it, and in the distance, he could see a light on board the schooner. He seemed to stand between the north star, and the schooner he looked at the former for some time, and then returned to his inn, and went to bed.

The next morning was a busy day ; the purchaser of the wines came on board, and was eager for his cases ; these had been, by some oversight, stowed beneath some of the casks. It required a world of labour to remove the one to get at the other ; but as the merchant would have them at any price, one or two were ultimately got up, and placed in the boat. Carlos was deaf to all entreaties, as to landing, dining, or playing, and the Captain was busy getting some water on board, in a large boat, which he had hired for the occasion.

“ Ah ! ” said the Spaniard, rather discontented at not getting more cases, and being refused the company of lively Carlos, “ you discredit me, you will not trust me ; my word, as a merchant, is no security ; you told me last night, I should have a case or two ; nay, you said, that you had disposed of the cargo, and got the money ; but what are these casks ? — all wine casks, by St. Jago de Compostella, and full to the bung holes.”

“ Yes,” said Carlos, unabashed, at the detection, “ I have sold them, and got the

money, but the purchaser has not taken them away. I'll come ashore, if I can. Good evening."

CHAPTER VI.

“By St. Francisco,” said Carlos to the Captain, after the merchant had returned on shore, “that fellow is a greater mule than those which carry the dollars, for he is not contented at being eased of his load. Holy St. Iago, that a man with no more brains than a chocolate cup, should have a daughter so lovely, so clever. I’ll just step on shore with my guitar and sing her, *¡O soy contrabandista*, perhaps she would have no objection to be smuggled on board.”

“Or carry on an illicit trade,” said the Captain. “Carlos, Carlos, there never was a woman ugly in your eyes, as long as she was young.”

“ Youth, Sir, is always lovely. I hate the decrepitude of age, or the near approach to it ; spring is always blooming, but the last tint of autumn, before the winter begins, is an unnatural hue. Isabella is in her spring, and she is the only girl I ever loved.”

“ Why you told that story to her at Puerto Caballo, the same I’ll be bound you hinted to marry.”

“ But let me go on shore now, and rely upon my being here before ten o’clock.”

“ I would trust you, Carlos, with wealth untold ; I would place you amidst the choicest wines ; I would stake my existence upon your prudence at the gaming table ; your secrecy ; your honour, in all, and every thing, but a woman ; you are invulnerable, immoveable, but by women ; if Isabella were but to take your hand, nay, even to look at you, with one look of those dark clear eyes, and you saw yourself reflected in hers, although the clock chimed the prelude to its striking ten, you would forget your companions, the important moment, the prize, the riches, our mutual safety, our freedom

for another and another moment's last farewell, which would mount up to another and another quarter, until the time had passed, and our cruise unprofitable. Do not go."

"Trust me in this for once."

"To what end? you cannot, by the laws which hold us together, bring the girl on board; you must not marry the next moment to desert her; and why, with all these impediments in the way, seek to make her unhappy?"

"By St. Francisco, Captain, you have as much morality as a padre, and as much coolness as a northern winter; but I think on the coast of Wales the climate must be warmer."

"Hist, not a word; go on shore, Carlos, if you will; remember, we cannot act without you; we do not know where to land, and do not, for Isabella's charms, which you will forget the moment you are absent, lose so great a prize, and one which will make us independent for life." Carlos leapt into the boat, his dark countenance was shaded from the sun's rays by a large broad brimmed Panama hat, but his fine manly form had no useless dangles of

cloth to conceal it; he waved his hand, struck a cord on his guitar, and urging the rower to make greater speed, landed.

The merchant was at his store, Isabella was alone, even her companion was absent; a slight flush suffused her cheek, as the gay, handsome, volatile Carlos, who knew well how to profit by the lucky moment, carelessly said, "*A los pies de usted*," placed his hat and guitar on a chair, and advanced to the fair Isabella. She was seated at a shaded window, and had been watching the small mirror, which is attached to most Spanish windows, and gives notice of those who frequent the street. He kissed her hand; she merely turned away her lovely face; she felt something warm drop upon it; she turned, Carlos was in tears—then all the woman overcame even Spanish restraint; she did not speak, but her eyes—her whole countenance of alarm was more eloquent than words.

"Hard fate," said Carlos, "cruel, cruel fortune! I see all my happiness within my reach, and dare not grasp it."

“Stand up,” said Isabella, “Francisca might come in, and this attitude would but alarm her—what has happened to dull the spirits of the gay Don Carlos?”

“News to you perhaps but indifferent; to me, more deadening in spirits than the sirocco to a Sicilian; well may I be sorrowful, although I brought that guitar hoping to reanimate myself. We sail to-morrow.” Carlos watched the change of countenance, which even a woman could not control; and where the heart is concerned, and maiden modesty the safe guard, the cheek is slow to confess even the anguish of that heart.

“You hear it with indifference,” continued the artful Carlos; “your cheek is unchanged.”

Isabella felt it burning.

“Your eye undimmed—your”—

“Ungrateful Carlos,” said Isabella, as her eyes streamed with tears. “I could not control my feelings, which, now expressed, you may despise.”

“Hast thou heard, fair Isabella, of those nu-

merous saints, whose names are recorded in our calendar, and who, from the purity of their lives, are now companions in heaven—by those ! by the blessed Virgin ! not purer than thou, fairest, dearest, creature !”

He had taken hold of her hand, and pressed it fervently to his lips. “ Nay, upon this record, this which I so much covet, thy hand, thy lip,” he kissed it, “ I swear that no cold indifference shall ever chill the heart of Carlos. From the moment the weary mariner saw the bright light of those eyes which welcomed him into the heaven of happiness, all his past troubles, his sleepless nights, his days of anguish passed, and hope, hope inspired him. Isabella, my life, my fortune is yours, dispose of them mercifully—one word and I cease to exist ; one word and I am the happiest of men ! Say, is that love returned ?”

There was all the fear which a maiden feels when she is about to make an avowal which her modesty controls, in the downcast look, the streaming eye, the trembling form of Isabella. Carlos was on one knee, clasping her

willing hand in his, watching with eyes all radiant with fire, and yet with all the vacancy of passion, "Speak, Isabella, speak, is it thus the purest affection is returned, that you do not find it worthy of a word, or am I in your silence to read the most eloquent of expressions?"

He thought he felt her hand gently, very gently squeeze his; he gave a warmer impression; again hers was stronger, it was a moment of most awful suspense, as he faltered with upturned eyes—"Isabella!"

It was all over, she had merely answered "Carlos," his hand was round her waist, his lips were glued to hers, and in spite of Voltaire's opinion on the subject of kissing, the mustachios were not in the way.

Perhaps in all life—and life has its brighter tints, although sorrow may predominate—there is no moment so truly bursting with delight, as that when a passion is confessed on one side, and acknowledged on the other; the first flood of tears pours out all care, all sorrow, all misgiving, all anguish; it leaves happiness,

high and dry in the port, in the perfect confidence that no flood tide of misery will ever float it out to sea again. Alas, alas that human beings can build up such an imaginary edifice, which a breath after marriage so frequently crumbles to dust !

Carlos was a cool calculating villain ; his ready command of words, his usual warmth of expression had served him well. The girl believed him, and they are ever ready to believe those who follow up a declaration by rapid sentiments ; a man is ever in danger of a refusal from one not wholly and devotedly his, who, after making his first avowal, stands in silence for an answer : it is like addressing a jury, the oftener you dwell upon a weak point of your adversary's evidence, the more likely you are to gain your cause ;—juries are generally composed of most consummate fools, and young girls are very weak and credulous.

The world was now shut out from Isabella ; she saw but Carlos, whose warm and affectionate manner soon led her to be confirmed in the truth of his words ; her tremulous hand

was never withdrawn, her eyes were radiant with expression, her lips were red with biting, and thus the beauty of St. Iago de Cuba became within the grasp of Carlos. There was a clock in the room, it told the hour faithfully, it was near seven; two hours elapsed before the all-confiding Isabella had listened to the wondrous tales of Carlos, and saw, or thought she saw in him the very hero of romance; he spoke of the wonders of Mexico, of the mighty capitol of Rome, of the lofty minarets of Constantino-ple—and the poor girl, whose whole life and existence had been spent within the circuit of two miles of the place where she then sat, scarcely found words to express her wonder, her amazement.

Isabella resembled all Spanish women of that miserable town; born mostly in poverty and nurtured always in ignorance, the stigma attached to discovery alone keeps them virtuous; the greater the beauty, the surer her fall; well indeed might that beauty be called a fatal gift, when ignorance or poverty are its companions.

Isabella was strictly Spanish, there was not

a drop of Creole blood in her veins. She was haughty, and by those with whom she associated envied; the malice of the female tongue, although it could not actually fix a reproach, contrived to whisper suspicions; the haughty Spaniard treated all with the contempt the falsehood merited; but now she was on the brink of the precipice; and Francisca, the maid in whom she most relied, was already a confidant in her affections. Carlos's voice had reached Francisca, and she too felt a curious sensation which she could not controul; but she had never seen him. She was young and beautiful, and perhaps for that very reason although she was partially a menial, she was denied.

"You sail to-morrow, Carlos; when will you return?" these were the first words the enamoured girl had uttered.

"To-morrow," murmured Carlos, "would it were true that the morrow never comes! How can I leave you when my heart sinks at the very thought? It must not be; listen, Isabella:—before long your father will return, he thinks more of his wealth than of the beauty of St.

Iago; you are of little assistance to him; his mornings are spent at his store, his evenings at the Monte table, his dinner is hasty, his supper when you have retired; he would not, I think, dearest girl, miss your absence much."

Isabella started.

"Nay, nay, dearest girl, be not alarmed; with me you would ever be in security, ever by my side. Our marriage could be celebrated at Campeche where we shall arrive to-morrow night, (Carlos knew his victim was ignorant of the distance) there the priest will unite us; there we will remain happy and contented until our return to Cadiz, which will occupy *perhaps a week's voyage* and we will then live in that city from which your parents came, and to which you will joyfully return."

Isabella shook her head. Carlos prevented any reply.

"Then you must lose me, part with me perhaps for ever, for the schooner may not return—and having filled my cup of happiness to the brim, would you dash it from my lips untasted? Come, dearest Isabella, your father is

absent at the Monte table ; already it is dark ; (it was nearly nine, time flies fast when love bears it on wings) with your maid's assistance or without it we may succeed ; perhaps better to keep her in ignorance. Let us walk out to the little point which is covered with trees ; about a mile beyond the town, there is a boat not far distant, and once on board, we will weigh the anchor and be safe. Come, dearest, best beloved of women, with this I will secure your consent, this kiss which I so fondly imprint. Throw but the mantilla and the dark veil over your form ; where there is no suspicion, concealment is useless ; there now, we are prepared, walk gently on and I will follow ; nay, you must go first, or I should betray myself by constantly turning to behold my prize."

" I cannot, Carlos, I cannot."

" You are already veiled, our time is precious, (the clock struck nine) before ten I must be on board ; now courage and advance." Isabella trembling with apprehension looked round the room, it was nearly dark, she held her hands as if yielding to Carlos, but appealing

for protection to some higher power ; he feared that moment of suspense ; he took her hand and the first false step was made.

Francisca, the only inmate of the house, had heard—had seen the lovers ; her mistress's flight entailed her certain ruin, for she was a stranger in St. Jago de Cuba, a native of Venezuela. She was quick in her thoughts, quicker, in her actions. As her mistress turned away, from the picture of her mother, to trust herself with her future husband, Francisca entered, bearing a light in each hand ; her eye fell on Carlos, for the first time ; she gave a loud shriek, and fell on the ground.

“ Now, Isabella, now, before she recovers—quick, quick !”

“ No, no ! I cannot, do not force me. Francisca ! Francisca !” said the half frantic girl, “ awake ;” she rubbed her heart—she took some water, and bathed her forehead—she called to Carlos, to lift her up—she never looked but on her companion, “ Ah, her eyes open ; courage, Francisca, what ails you, girl ? It was but Carlos—here, look at him.”

Francisca placed her hands upon her eyes, as if to exclude the light.

"Carlos," said Isabella, "lift her up, and place her on the chair, she will recover in a moment;" she turned, wondering at the silence—Carlos had disappeared, and she was alone with Francisca."

"It was him," she said, "years might pass—climate might change him—sickness might reduce him; but it is him, who ruined, and deserted me; he avenged my father's death, it is true:—but that man is Carlos, the pirate; it was in a church, he swore to marry me—it was in a church, and before the altar; he—why are you dressed, as if you would accompany *him*? he is a liar, an infamous, perjured liar—he is a thief—I saw him strike his Captain to the ground, aye, in my own murdered father's house—and kill him."

"Poor Francisca!" said Isabella; "you rave child—you are distracted; this is Carlos, the supercargo of the schooner, who sold the wine to my father."

"He is a murderer, and a liar!" she stop-

ped as if collecting her thoughts, then suddenly burst out, in a hurried manner, "When does the schooner sail?"

"To-morrow, child."

"She never sails in the day-time; send for your father instantly; to-night they must meditate some scheme, which will lead to ruin and bloodshed; we are, perhaps, in time. Listen, the clock is now striking ten."

"Poor child!"

"It is you that will be poor;—ah! now I see it all. To-night the mules arrive—your father must be in his store, that is the object which I will frustrate." She instantly left the room, whilst Isabella still clinging to the hope that her lover had but absented himself to avoid a scene, which a fainting woman is sure to produce, looked from her window into the dark, and almost deserted streets.

"You lingered until the last moment, Carlos," said the Captain, who stood by the gunwale of the schooner, as the boat touched her side, "pay the man and dispatch him; our boats are on the other side, manned, and

ready ; pass over and shove off—mind,” he continued, addressing the mate, “ no bloodshed—no useless violence ; your arms are only to protect you—not to make you the assailants ; there are not more than three men and you are sixteen. I shall weigh, and stand up towards the point—remember, not a word is to be spoken, and not one moment lost—shove off.”

The schooner now weighed her anchor, there was a very light breeze off the land from the direction of the town, so that it was unnecessary to set any sail, but the fore stay-sail, a sail which had been before frequently hoisted, to keep the schooner clear of her anchor—well did the Captain know the depth of water above the town : every evening, or rather every night, had the soundings been obtained. The boats, with muffled oars, had proceeded silently on their course ; not the slightest trace of their track could be discovered ; the oars were dipped cautiously in the water, and no phosphorescent brightness betrayed the advance

of the plunderers. The schooner as silently stole from her anchorage. Not a word had been spoken; the freshening breeze assisted her, every sail was ready to be set, and darkness favoured the undertaking.

CHAPTER VII.

CARLOS steered the boat to the point he had selected, and near which the narrow road winded through some rocks. It was about two miles distant from St. Jago.

The crew were stationed in concealment, having first run a rope across the road, which was fastened to a rock on one side, but left loose so that any strange traveller might have passed over it without injury. The little bell was sure to give notice of the mules approach, and afford sufficient time to complete all arrangements.

From the schooner, was observed an unusual bustle in the town; lights were seen, and the silence, generally so common in St. Jago, was

disturbed by loud voices, which reached the schooner.

"What can this mean?" asked the Captain of the Spitfire, "surely the mules cannot have arrived, and all our plans frustrated; the sound of the drum is like a general call to arms, and I heard some hails to the gun boat, which lies near the pier head. Carlos," he said to himself, "cannot have proved false—but if he has, he shall not secure me. Loose the sails, my lads, and clear these guns away—get some muskets on deck, and let every man wear his cutlass—back the topsail," he then placed look-out men at the different quarters; a boat was soon heard, but it proceeded towards the entrance of the harbour, and seemed not to take any notice of the Spitfire; which vessel having her head to the northward, gently crept towards her own boat. The noise on shore, however increased, and several lights were seen extending towards the Havanah road.

"I hear the bell," said Carlos; "they cannot be far, let us now make preparations with the rope," this was instantly tightened, and being

about three feet from the ground, and running across the road, would have prevented the advance of any animals.

"These fellows," said the mate, as he heard the shouts of people, in the direction of the town, "are getting ready to rejoice at the arrival of their dollars; but I scarcely think they can be so far distant, as the town." Carlos heard the sounds also, and his heart misgave him, he silently vented his rage, his impotent rage, against the babbling of the female sex; he cursed his own imprudence and he foresaw, as both sounds increased, that those from St. Jago would arrive certainly not five minutes after the mules. The plunderers could not move onwards to meet the mules, because they were already at the nearest point to the boats; and if they advanced, the labour of conducting the plunder, would be trebled. It was a moment of intense anxiety—and that moment was not lost in idleness; a plan was arranged in the event of an attack, for now and then a drum was overheard; it was the herald of the soldiery, and all the truth

flashed at once upon Carlos' mind—a woman's vengeance is never appeased; but Carlos was not a man to be taken alive, and to be the scoff of her he had insulted, and betrayed;—to him life was indifferent, as long as no woman was present.

“What think you of this?” said the mate to the Spaniard; “those drums are not used, without bayonets follow—and they are evidently nearing us fast.”

“So do the mules,” said Carlos; “as the mules arrive, we must unload them instantly, and make a rush to the boat; we shall have five minutes clear work, and in that time we could dismantle a cathedral, and sell the priest to the highest bidder, in the market place. Those men placed nearest the town, must commence firing directly the troops heave in sight; it will check them for a minute, to get into order, before they advance, and one minute, if well used, ought to get us into the boats.”

“We shall be finely peppered, as we pull out.”

“I think we shall,” said Carlos coolly; “but

his most excellent Majesty, the King of Spain never yet had (at least in St. Jago) one soldier, who did not shut his eyes when he fired."

"Ah but," said the mate, "a chance shot—"

"May hit the devil; he is not amongst us—he is looking after those of whom he has some doubt; we are all safe enough."

The mules now advanced; the leading one had walked against the rope and stopped; four men unloaded the second, and at once walked off with the cargo to the boat. With the third, they were as successful—for the mule drivers were all lagging behind, smoking, or relating some perilous action, in which they were heroes.

The stoppage of the third mule arrested the whole line, and the muleteers having walked against the hindmost one, before they found out the truth, advanced in a body to rectify any mishap; whilst the mules all got together, and began kicking and floundering. Three had been unloaded, when the two men, stationed nearest the town, opened their fire; and the two first mule drivers found

themselves bound and on the earth ; a regular rush was made by the Spitfire's crew at the bags of dollars, but great difficulty was experienced in getting hold of them. The other mule drivers, hearing the screams of their fellow travellers, jumped upon a rock and fired off their guns ; whilst the soldiers having received their first check, rushed gallantly forward. A reinforcement of four men was sent to support the two, and the road being very narrow, they kept the soldiers from coming to close quarters ; in the mean time, a gun from the Spitfire was heard, and the whole harbour and roadstead seemed in confusion.

“ To the boat,” roared the mate.

“ Time enough to unload two more of them,” said Carlos. A volley from the soldiers came whizzing in amongst them, “ there, all that's over, now for the next mule ;—that's right.

“ Prisoner, stop,” said a man who leaped from the rock, and seized Carlos by the arm ;—at that moment he was alone cutting off another bag. Carlos shook him off like a child, and drew his cutlass ; his antagonist advanced, and a hand to

hand fight ensued. The soldiers on their side advanced, and the Spitfire's men seeing themselves inevitably overpowered, if they dared long to resist, retreated keeping their fronts to their enemy, towards the boats. At first they retrograded leisurely, but as the soldiers advanced, the retreat became more rapid, and ultimately, might be termed, a flight. The firing on the left was still kept up by the muleteers, who from the height on which they had clambered, blazed away in security, and Carlos seeing the only check to the troops, using their legs to the best advantage, became aware of his destitute situation; already, had the foremost soldier placed himself between him and the boat; he struck desperately at the man whose blows he had merely before parried; the sword broke in his hand—he rushed unarmed at the first soldier—caught him by the collar of his coat, and urged him forward, until he disposed of him in a neighbouring ravine; he arrived on the beach—the boat was in the act of shoving off—his spring was tremendous—he lighted on the gunwale, and stood in the stern sheets, ready to return the fire.

“ Now then, give way for your lives, by heaven ! there is a gun boat pulling up, and the soldiers are at the beach ;” loud roared the cannon and the muskets. The hardy seamen bent their backs and pulled for their very existence, and Carlos aware that his solitary musket could be but little avail, contributed his strength to the strokesman’s oar. The gun boat’s shower of grape passed harmless astern ; the hasty muskets of the soldiers seemed to verify Carlos’ notion of the closed eyes, although, one shot took effect, and disabled the bow-oar ; he was replaced in a moment, and every effort used to save the boat, by passing her adversary, and getting between her and the schooner.

“ Why the devil does not the Spitfire open her broadside,” said the mate.

“ Don’t look to her, my lads,” said Carlos, “ you know the Captain will not fire, without the danger is imminent ; we can manage that heavy boat ourselves—the breeze is fresh, so that if he captured us, the schooner would have her before she reached the shore. Here comes the little craft right between us.”

Shouts were heard from the soldiers en-

couraging the hands in the gun boat to seize the schooner's boat. The fire was still kept up, although with trifling effect, and the shot from the gun boat again fell harmless. The Spitfire ran astern of her crew—luffed quickly up—threw a rope into the boat ; and Carlos's minute was quite sufficient to place the plunder on board, and the crew in security. The sails now filled to the fresh breeze. The Spitfire soon left the gun boat far astern, and every sail was crowded to get clear of the harbour.

The plunder, although considerable, was not one half so much as was expected ; only six of the mules had been unladen, the rest had been rescued by the unusual activity of the soldiers, and the determined kicking of the restless brutes. There was a respite from the firing. The Spitfire was out of sight, standing down towards the Moro. Every light was extinguished—the night was very dark, and it required every attention to avoid the numerous low islands which intervene between the Moro and the town of St. Jago.

The excitement was over ; some laid down

to rest themselves, others walked in silence to and fro; but Carlos stood looking over the stern with his arms folded, watching the last glimmer of the lights, which were still visible from the Spitfire.

"Carlos," said the Captain, "you know more of this surprize than any of us."

"Have I not ever done my duty, since you knew me?"

"Have I ever found fault with you?"

"Why do you suspect me now?"

"Some woman, Carlos—some woman fathomed our intention—you trifled your time to the last moment—the clock struck ten as you touched the side of the schooner—the lights appeared in the town, not five minutes after the boats left us."

"The devil was there in petticoats, and recognized me at a glance; the woman you have heard mentioned, when my former captain was killed—she saw me—she at once knew our purpose—she must have alarmed the governor, and he was more active than usual in protecting the merchants."

"I saw a boat go down this way, at least an hour ago; it must have been sent to have warned the governor of the castle, not to let us pass."

"Blow, blow, my freshening breeze," said Carlos, "and the Spitfire will be safe; we shall be at sea before they can fire ten guns, and out of these, few will reach their destination. If ever, Captain, I get in love with a woman again, I hope you will do me the favour to keep me on board, on bread and water, for the next month; nothing but starving me can keep me cool. When we are clear out, I will confess how much I am to blame in the affair."

"This will be a most serious affair to-night," said the Captain, "the castle's strength is sufficient to stop the exit of a squadron; and much depends upon this fickle breeze, it keeps unusually variable and the land breeze, which on almost every night would take us clear of the fort in a few minutes, seems beaten by the gusty weather, which occasionally is dead against us; go out we must, or our capture is inevitable. See there—the Moro is illuminated, and there lies the gun boat."

The words were scarcely delivered, when a round shot came between the masts of the Spitfire, passing through the fore and aft fore sail.

"That's the right sound," said Carlos, as he took the wheel; "this is my station now."

The shot was followed by a fire of musketry, from men concealed amongst the rocks to leeward; it was requisite to hug the shore on the windward side as close as possible.

"Luff, Carlos," said the captain, "luff close up; the water is deep near the Moro; the closer we are the better the shot will go over us; they will not be long in following the example of that dirty gun boat, which even I could find in my heart to dispatch, and leave its cowardly crew to swim for it; sheltered by the rocks, shrouded by the darkness, the little cur can snap; faith, I will forget my vow, and give it one shot."

"It's not worth it, Sir," said Carlos.

"No higher, Carlos; why you will run us bowsprit on to the Moro."

"Can't knock it down with the stick."

At this moment a hail was heard, it was

merely a noise bellowed through a long speaking trumpet, not one word could be distinguished.

The Captain answered it, speaking through a port hole ; when the fort opened its fire, about a dozen long thirty-two pounders, enough to stagger a frigate, were fired at the schooner and the rest of the garrison, whose duty was not at the long guns, kept up a continual fire of musquetry. The Spitfire was so very close to the rocks that the artillery men could not sufficiently depress the guns ; the soldiers however were most successful and the musket balls rattled against the sides or pierced the sails.

“ Keep close under the bulwarks fore and aft, let every man lie down ; Carlos, make yourself as small you can.”

“ No fear of me, Sir, besides I must look out for the steerage.” The wind favoured the schooner, not a word was uttered, but “ luff, luff ;” the surf was visible close upon the lee bow, the outer rock was discovered, dark as the night was, and great doubts were entertained if the Spitfire would weather it, or be obliged

to tack; whenever the roar of the guns ceased, the roar of the sea rolling against the rocky reef and boiling over it, kept up the unwelcome sounds.

“Throw her up in the wind, Carlos,” said the Captain, “but don’t let her come about.” The schooner’s helm was put gently a lee; the swell of the sea was not sufficient, much to impede the manœuvre; she shot a long way to windward of the rocks, when she again filled on the same tack and looked well to windward of the reef; she was now well away from under the Moro, and the shot began to come with more effect; one struck her on the starboard quarter and nearly ripped her up fore and aft; whilst a shower of grape and cannister, fired with admirable accuracy, came smack on board of her. The mate who had the moment before crossed to leeward, to see how far the damage had extended, was killed; and Carlos, who lifted one leg rather hastily had got a graze; the next shot came with the same precision, but did not do equal damage, it passed over the bulwark and grazed the foremast. The stead-

iness with which the schooner was steered,—for directly they cleared the rocks, she was kept well full, contributed much to her salvation; every one of the crew, but Carlos, were sent below, with orders to be ready at a moment's notice, whilst the steersman sang a song with as steady a voice as if he was in a room with his guitar. The gun boat had now pulled out clear of the harbour and opened her fire; the first shot passed through the topsail, and the next, which was a mixture of grape, cannister, iron nails and necks of bottles, made as much row about the hull, as if a shower of hail converted suddenly into halfpence would have done.

It made no difference in the steerage, neither shot or shell could move Carlos; the Spitfire had good way upon her and in spite of every exertion, she was now clear of the harbour and almost totally out of sight.

“ Luff up, Carlos, a couple of points, those fellows will have to alter the aim of their guns and they can scarcely see us now.”

This succeeded; every shot afterwards fell to leeward of her, and by one o'clock in the morning, the Spitfire was running down towards the Gulf of Mexico.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE welcome dawn of day saw the Spitfire's crew busily employed repairing her damages; new sails were bent, a party of hands were set to work to patch up the ones just unbent, carpenters were at work, replacing the outward gunwale, which a shot had ripped up, and one man was employed in the very unusual occupation of sewing up the body of the mate; he was the only one killed. Carlos had been wounded slightly, but he doctored himself, and was foremost at work.

It had ever been the custom before the present Captain was sworn into the command, to bury a man as unceremoniously as people

dispose of blind puppies, an hour or two after they are born; but he who had been forced into the situation he held, and bound by an oath, as solemn as it was extraordinary, found himself an absolute monarch with subjects, pledged to obey him to every extremity. The cruelties which had disgraced the Spitfire, under the miserable ruffian, who was killed by Carlos, were dispensed with; from the moment the new Captain assumed his command, the vessel exhibited altogether another appearance. From an apparently slovenly schooner, she had become the neatest specimen of seamanship; the men were no longer allowed to appear on deck, in unfit or unseemly garments; a kind of man of war discipline, superseded the former privateer's disorganization, and the schooner might have been surveyed through the largest lens of a telescope without a fault being discovered.

To pay due homage to the dead, was to honour the living; no corpse was now bundled overboard in all its naked horrors; it was shrouded in canvass, a service was read which

was a mockery of religion, from the lips which uttered the prayer; still even to those who broke down every law of society, it brought superstition to the aid of civilization, and impressed them with an awe, a feeling of repentance for the moment, which time might mature.

The corpse of the mate was, therefore, in accordance with the practice now followed on board the Spitfire, committed to the deep in a decent manner; the crew stood uncovered as the service was read; those of the Catholic faith, crossed themselves devoutly, and those who disgraced the name of Christian Protestants bowed lowly, as the splash was heard which hid for ever from their sight, their former companion or friend. The share of prizemoney, which would have been the portion of the dead, was equally distributed amongst the crew; in this the Captain never participated; the effects of the deceased were sold, his name was blotted out in a few hours almost from memory, and his successor was obeyed.

To choose the successor was always the work of some time, and frequently of some distur-

bance in the election ; every man had a voice, excepting the Captain ; for to the mate as to the senior officer, they were bound, by a solemn vow, and which invested him with the same authority of the Captain, in the event of the sudden death of the latter ;—a lawless band—a people at war with all around them—a horde regardless of religion, had yet some honour. From the time the mate or captain were chosen, from that moment, if any one murmured against an order, the rest would have risen against the mutineer, and perhaps have disposed of him in a most summary manner.

The dead being half forgotten with the burial, became a stepping stone to his successor ; a bell was rung, which, as at the elections of the Doges of Venice, was set apart for the election of the schooner's officers, and never used on other occasions ; all hands came on deck, and were addressed by the Captain.

“ My men, a duty devolves upon you, which the sooner you perform the better—the election of a mate. I on this occasion have no voice, it is entirely in your hands. I should be giving

an undue weight, or perhaps injuring the one I should recommend; and in naming one, I should be guilty of some dereliction of duty. Chose therefore your own; bravery, coolness, talent, sobriety, should ever precede the wavering, the noisy, the witless, or the drunkard. But amongst us, there is not a man who could come under such censure; you are all resolute, all sober; your choice will meet my approbation. I shall return to my cabin until you have selected your future second in command; after which he will be duly sworn, and according to our custom, the prize money will be distributed afterwards."

The crew knew well on whom the Captain would have the lot fall; and although he was hated by some, and feared by others, yet his acknowledged bravery, his coolness, his intrepidity, pointed him out as the best man. But there was another—who was a great favorite—Tom Snarling—who was as reckless of danger as of life; against him, was the circumstance of his being an Englishman, the crew being well aware that both captain and mate should never

be of the same country ; besides which, and it afterwards occurred, when the ship changed her nation with her colours, that the Captain was obliged to cede his situation, it was then requisite that a trusty person should be invested with the dignity ; this consideration outweighed all envy and hatred. The lots were marked and numbered ; and Carlos was declared the mate. The bell rang again ; the crew divided themselves on each side of the deck ; upon which a chair was brought, and Carlos setting therein ; swore to the following terrible oath, which was his commission to assume his rank.

The Captain read it to him slowly, whilst the crew listened with impatience, lest any word should be omitted.

“ In the name of the power above, and in the name of all his host of angels and of ministers, whom I invoke to bear record of my words—in the name of him below, whom we fear, and whom we hate, I swear—”

Here Carlos being a Catholic, knelt down, and made the sign of the cross.

“ I swear that, from this moment to the end of my life, I devote myself, without any reserve,

to the crew of this vessel, the Spitfire; that I will never leave her without the permission of the crew; that in sickness, in health, in adversity or in prosperity, I will never leave, desert, quit, or resign without the consent of those who placed me here.—I will obey my Captain, even to my death, in all transactions. I will be bound by the laws we have established; and in all my doings I will act in strict conformity to our regulations; and I invoke those powers, in the event of my failing to fulfil this my oath, to shower down upon me all the miseries to which human nature is susceptible; may all the maladies in which lingering wretches who crave to die, still exist, be my fate; may my days be restless, my nights sleepless, the pains and agonies of hell, goad me on to desperation, my limbs wither from my body, my body paralyzed by sickness, my breath tainted, my eyeballs sightless, my soul damned, if I fail in any thing I have sworn! But, above all, I implore that power to shower upon me ten thousand times the miseries that mortals ever imagined, if I, by word or deed, thought or design,

betray one of this crew, or raise my hand or my voice to witness against him in a court of justice ; may my tongue rot from its roof to the tip, and leave me a speechless liar, if I am in this guilty ; but I swear to state all that is false, unless the truth can benefit the prisoner. To this in all and every part, to every word and sentence, I swear by Him above, by him below ; by all that rules, by all that serves, I swear."

Carlos then rose, after having again and again made the sign of the cross ; a small badge was suspended round his neck ; and Carlos the murderer, became the mate of the Spitfire.

There was a look of great satisfaction in the captain when his chosen spirit was elected, not that he admired the deed which had placed him as the captain of the Spitfire, for no act of his unfortunate life was more hateful to him than that minute of misfortune which obliged him to die, or to assume the command. The child of circumstances had he been from his birth, and now apparently fixed for his life ; for the oath Carlos had taken, he had taken ; the only

difference being that his was more comprehensive, and more disgusting. He had to drink a drop of each man's blood, and they had bound themselves to him, by tasting his. All the horrors of the most perverted imagination, all the terrors of devils, and destruction, had been used to make the Captain adhere to his oath, and the crew to be obedient to their's. The Captain had laid a deep scheme to shake off the yoke which enthralled him, and Carlos was the most likely man to enter into his views.

The prize money was now to be shared out. The dollars were strewn upon the deck ; each man sat down to pile them up in pillars of one hundred each ; and strange it was, that although all were thieves, not one was ever known to appropriate any of the plunder to his individual use ; there was honour amongst that fraternity. The crew amounted to forty men, including the captain and mate ; and the plunder was thus divided : three eighths were set apart ; two eighths was the captain's, and the other one the mate's proportion ; four eighths were then

equally divided amongst the rest; and the remaining one was kept in a chest for the pensions of those who, being maimed in the service, returned on shore in the capacities of spies and informers.

On this occasion, the plunder was not more in all than eight thousand dollars;—a great deal more had been calculated upon; the sale of the wine, the produce of a little piracy near Martinique had not realized much. The object was the return of the mules, the intelligence of which had been learnt at the Havanah; the wine was only the excuse for entering the harbour of St. Jago de Cuba. The distribution passed off quietly; the former mate's seighth was thrown into the general account; and Carlos having put his share in a bag, took possession of his cabin, and felt himself a rising man in the honorable profession he had selected.

The schooner was running down before the trade wind, keeping a good distance from the land of Cuba; once or twice Carlos hinted that something might be gleaned from Trinidad de Cuba; but the late exploit would soon find its

way there, embellished by a thousand exaggerations. In-shore was a man-of-war brig beating up to Jamaica, and she was too intent upon her own occupations to heed the Spitfire; the next morning saw the schooner in the Gulf of Mexico, standing along shore towards Campeche; she boarded one or two small vessels, but as they were quite insignificant, no piracy was committed, and no intelligence received.

Of all places Campeche is the worst for vessels dealing in illicit traffic; the water is shoal for a long distance, three miles is reckoned an in-shore berth; and at that distance from the shore the Spitfire anchored.

It was generally the custom, when the crew had some prize money, to take the schooner to some place, where suspicion was not so soon excited, and there to allow the crew some time to waste in dissipation and in idleness. She always, on this occasion, became an English privateer; for which purpose she had a letter of marque, and all the papers requisite to pass as such; her Captain visited even the Consul; he gave an account of his successful cruise with

a certain degree of accuracy; he sometimes communicated intelligence of much importance; and being a man conversant in the ways and manners of the world, was generally interesting and much liked.

Whilst the men revelled in luxury on shore, Carlos and the Captain remained on board; and on the night after their arrival at Campeche, when the sun was down, and the beautiful evening of those climates had succeeded the violent and oppressive heat of the day, some of that elixir of life, brandy, was brought on deck and the following conversation passed. "I rejoice, Carlos, that the crew elected you, as in the event of any thing befalling me, you will rise to the command; that has ever been the rule, without some extraordinary case, such as my own, occurred."

"You are younger than me, and thinner than I am; therefore the chances of life and shot are in your favour, and I may calculate on dying the mate of the Spitfire."

"But when you may have saved sufficient money to retire, Carlos, have you no friends

to whom you would like to return, no old mother whose embrace you covet before you die, no fond affectionate sister, no brother, or no girl to whom your heart is devoted?"

"And what would be the use? that oath—I feel myself shiver when I think of it—it binds me as it does you, and all of us, to continue for ever true to the Spitfire; we could not leave her, not if we had all the wealth of all Vera Cruz! I have a father, a mother, a sister, a brother; but as to the girl, faith! I would not pledge myself to any particular one; the world is my plaything—women are the best part of the world—therefore they are principally my toys; one is serious about an oath,—but with a woman we only jest, only amuse ourselves."

"And yet, Carlos, I would give wealth untold, to be able, at some distant period, to retire and live on shore. I mean when one increases in age, and when some of the infirmities of life warn us that we are not everlasting."

"The oath, Captain, the oath! nothing can release you; the fair haired girl, who now sports

your Mexican presents at a ball with some favoured swain"—

" Carlos, speak against the constancy of all women, but of her."

" Well, well—Captain, that girl then who is so constant to you, might be persuaded to take a trip in the Spitfire. Why we could manage that to a certainty without asking her compliance ; you could bring her to the Tortugas ; and in our cavern, where something like luxury remains, she might welcome you on your return from a cruize ; and if she died, why the world has many more as good as she is."

" None, by heavens none ; and life without her is not worth the holding. The boat returns. Good night."

CHAPTER IX.

THERE is a mystery in that woman," said Sir Ronald to his wife, "which even the ingenuity of your father, the artful caution of yourself, cannot fathom; she holds those jewels as her own; it is now four months and six days since that miserable houseless vagabond, that thief, that deserter, that spy, came amongst us. Laura, from that moment, has become a recluse; never does she enliven one hour; and in pensive sadness seems to mourn him who vanished, as unexpectedly as he came."

"It may be love," replied Lady de Lancy, "or the balance of love which keeps her in this suspense. My father, you know, seeks to marry her; and I have, as he desired, and you wished, endeavoured to forward his views."

"I care not what becomes of him, Mar-

garet, so long as he marries and leaves this neighbourhood."

"That last is a useless wish; here he will stay, if merely to upbraid, by his presence, that delicate minded clergyman, who refused to marry his daughter to Sir Ronald de Lancy, forsooth! because I was an attorney's child. I loathe the man who, under the garb of meekness and religion, conceals pride which would startle Lucifer."

"Never leave *me*, do you say?"

"Never! his life is bound up with yours; it is requisite for my own safety, that my father is ever near me."

"Can I never shake off these cursed trammels which fix me, like a statue, to the earth? am I for ever and for ever to be the poor miserable wretch, loathed by myself, and insulted by all around me?"

"The penalty of crime," replied Lady de Lancy. "I am as miserable in being your wife, as you can be in the inheritance of your brother's fortune; but I scorn to be so petulant, so cowardly. Go to your room, and to your philo-

sophy; the haughty, proud Sir Ronald seems now to be frightened at a woman; and his eyes are fixed on the ground, instead of boldly meeting the gaze of his fellow-men. Leave Laura to me; I will place her in security; I will back my father's views; and we shall see if a woman's ingenuity cannot remove even a philosopher's fears."

The haughty, the imperious Sir Ronald, had fallen even in his own estimation; his character had been correctly drawn by his wife; that eye, which formerly could meet unabashed the gaze even of Mr. Molesworth, now quailed before the innocence of Laura Mackenzie; the room in which formerly his hours were passed in searching after knowledge, was now a resort to free himself from the importunities of others; he would gladly have sank into his grave, if the knowledge of the past could draw visions of future happiness. Such was the result of crime; it left the mind uneasy with itself; it planted a bitter sting which never ceased to goad; it made a coward of the brave, a child of the philosopher, an infant of the man.

“ Your legal adviser, Miss Mackenzie,” said Rawlinson as he pondered over the round hand letters from Mr. Law, “ goes slowly enough with your affairs. The laws’ delays are proverbial; but Mr. Law seems to delay the law.”

“ It is an irksome business indeed; much time has elapsed, and apparently little has been done; besides I fear my long residence at Raven Castle begins to be burthensome.”

“ That is a mistake which my daughter will, I hope, belie; she would be no daughter of mine to treat one I so much esteem in an unfriendly or an uncourteous manner; believe me you are in error; but about this letter, it appears that an old admirer of your mother’s, a boy then, went, after his passion was crossed, to India; that there he remained plodding his way through life unmarried. He amassed a good fortune; he died and left it to your mother; your mother died the very day on which the testator died; and the difficulty is this; in the event of your mother’s death before that of the testator the whole of the property passes to that uncle, you have mentioned. Mr Law is of

opinion that you will lose this fortune ; I am confident I could obtain it for you. The law knows no division of a day ; and therefore your mother surviving the day previous, is quite sufficient. Perhaps if I could sufficiently interest you in my favour to have one quarter the opinion of my talents that I have of your beauty and accomplishments, this business might be brought to a speedy issue ; for you, I could willingly undertake any trouble, any difficulty ; but you must bear in mind that it is requisite to be quick, to remove Mr. Law entirely from your confidence, to be guided by my advice solely."

" I cannot bring my mind to consent to an arrangement which would so seriously insult my kindest, my best friend. I would rather lose my chance of success, than hurt the feelings, the sensitive feelings, of that excellent man. Cannot you advise me in such a manner, that I can be the medium of conveying your sentiments?"

" I am sorry I have so little of the confidence of one whom I have so laboured to please, that a mere stranger, one whom accident

threw in your way, should supplant your best—your truest friend.”

“Not *supplant*, Mr. Rawlinson; if so, indeed, I should be ungrateful.”

“Do not let us differ about that or any other word; I am so anxious that no bribed attorney should ruin your cause;” Laura started—“such things have been, and will be again; your uncle is a quick, active man—money is requisite to him—he will spare no pains to gain it.”

“If I thought so, I would at once relinquish my claims on my mother’s estate, and live cheerfully in poverty, rather than her brother should be guilty of such an act.”

“Poverty, Miss Laura!” said Rawlinson, as he took her hand, “poverty and Laura can never be united. My fortune would be a load I could ill sustain, if Laura failed to share it.”

As this was a kind of an offer arising out of an act which had not taken place, Laura evaded the direct answer, and merely thanked Rawlinson for his kindness. The attorney saw through the evasion, but did not feel sufficient-

ly certain of success to force her to a plainer, and more intelligible reply. He rose evidently hastily, and took the papers—promised to peruse them—kissed her hand, and withdrew. Laura gave a deep sigh, and covering her face with her hand, burst into tears; she saw herself surrounded by people all interested in thwarting her heart's wishes. She had no place of refuge, and she had no one to apply to, for sufficient money to remove her to Cornwall.

Whilst brooding over her forlorn state, a letter was brought and handed to her; it was from Herbert. The old man wrote well—but the direction of this, was in the handwriting of another; it was the round, legible hand of an attorney's clerk; and habit had so far mastered the customs of the world, that there were two or three crooked lines, a humble imitation of words, to fill up each line of the direction, as if so many words were absolutely necessary, and no more to complete the line; it began, and contained the following information, and was given to Laura, after it had passed the scrutinizing eyes of Lady de Lancy, who considered it some legal

matter connected with her visiter's fortune.

“ Honored Madam,

“ I write to you in great haste ; *he* has been here, and I have seen and conversed with him ;—his first inquiries were for you, and I ventured to tell him every thing exactly as it stands ; he staid with me four hours, during which time he wrote down every thing I knew about his father. He then ordered a post chaise and four horses, and went to London ; he is looking uncommon well, and must have had some luck in life, for he was rolling in money, and gave me a very handsome present. He asked how long you were to remain at Raven Castle, and said, if you wrote down to me by return of post, he would call again before long, as he had some business at Falmouth. There is no news, excepting that some thieves in masks broke into the church and stole all the communion plate, and the same night, the bank was robbed of a large sum. There has been a gentleman here every day, trying to get me out, and come into the house himself ; but it is quite in vain, as Mr.

Law told me not to stir out, and not to let any one in. I have had a gardener at work for the last week, and every thing looks quite nice. I hope your ladyship's health is good as is mine.

Your obedient servant,

JOHN HERBERT."

The letter was no sooner read, than it was committed to the flames. Lady de Lancy came in as it blazed in the grate; she saw she had been deceived, for Laura always kept the attorney's letters, and invariably submitted them to the perusal of Rawlinson.

"You seem wonderfully excited," she began, "my dear Laura; the letter, I suppose, brought you good news."

"The best," she answered; "oh, I am so happy, so very happy!"

"I thought people generally retained a letter which bore such excellent tidings; why commit it to the flames, as if it were a record not worthy of perusal?"

"I know it by heart; I need no record."

"It is a wonderful change, this, from your

late sad, and dejected spirits. I hope you are made acquainted with the success of Mr. Laws' endeavours."

"I care not one straw now, about Mr. Laws' endeavours; justice is sure—however slow. Oh, Margaret, I should so like, whilst I feel myself so happy, to take a ride to-day; do allow me, and be my companion."

"Most certainly,—and now whilst you are in the vein for amusement, in three days there is a county ball,—we have never attended one, since the birth of my son. The rich should always patronize those things;—they are wonderfully stupid—but the young and the frivolous gather honey, even from a weed. I had wished, Laura, to have had a long conversation with you to-day, but as you are in such high spirits, I will keep my words for another occasion—now I will order the horses."

Sir Ronald was persuaded to accompany the party—he was still haughty and imperious to all around him; but Blackburn's voice was quite sufficient to unbend his lofty spirit, and he not unfrequently way-laid the Baronet, in

order to extract some small pittance in the way of charity.

“Where shall we ride, Laura?” asked Sir Ronald, for the Miss Mackenzie had dwindled down into the familiarity of the christian name.

“On the road which leads to London.”

“Why that is as hard and as stony as a miser’s heart,” replied Lady de Lancy smiling; “surely along the cliff, over the turf, would be better.” Laura was silent, and seemed dejected; they rode therefore in the direction she had expressed, as Lady de Lancy said “her young friend wished to ride upon that road.”

The conversation was gay and lively; the lip of Sir Ronald often expressed his satisfaction, and Margaret, as she laughed and rallied, concealed from her young companion that every movement of her eyes were watched—every word she uttered weighed and considered.

In that part of the county the mountain scenery is more attractive than scattered huts, or half formed villages; there nature is magni-

ficient, and the efforts of human beings but insignificant. The winding roads—the jutting rocks—the broken and disordered masses give a wild grandeur to all around. Sir Ronald was warm in his praises of these scenes, for he knew little of the crowd of courts, or the busy hum of men—in large and populous capitals ; he had been brought up as a kind of king in the desert, and he preferred to reign on the throne he had usurped, rather than mix with the multitude, and sink into insignificance. He pointed out the loveliest heights on which might be seen some goats careless of the precipice below, or bounding about from point to point, as if no danger lurked beneath. As yet not a soul had passed ; and now the quick pace of a person, approaching more to the gentleman than the pedestrian traveller, attracted some attention ; he was wrapped up in a large cloak, although the weather was far from cold ; he seemed struck by the appearance of the cavalcade, and choosing a path which led up one of the hills, he turned in that direction before the riders had overtaken him. Margaret and Sir

Ronald passed without deigning to turn their heads; Laura more inquisitive, did so, and when she resumed her former position she put her veil down; but Lady de Lancy had seen the blush which suffused her countenance.

The conversation turned upon the forthcoming ball, a miserable mimicry of monkeyism, as Sir Ronald termed it; but, in spite of his asperity of manner, it was decided to go. Even Laura, who since she had turned her head had scarcely spoken, interfered her wish to see so gay a sight.

“Go if you will,” said Sir Ronald, “be gratified by the most frivolous of exhibitions;—go, and if a parcel of fiddlers playing some jig, and the everlasting shuffle of your feet can give pleasure—enjoy it. I can see nothing but a remnant of barbarism in such heartless recreation; the very idea of grown men and women, hopping about to the tune of some miserable scraper on the violin, is so revolting to those who study the power of man’s mind, that books from whose golden store of infor-

mation, the mind is taught to expand itself, has more charms for me—even than the loveliest of your lovely sex, when capering in such childish amusements.”

“It brings people together, Sir Ronald,” said his wife; “it is the place where friends meet, and friendships are formed—it is the means of distributing money; and the most fastidious could hardly censure an amusement so innocent, yet so beneficial.

“It brings into one room,” said Sir Ronald in his cold manner, “the man of family and the miserable dependant; the highest born, and the vilest musician: those who have long withdrawn themselves from others once esteemed, are shuffled together in this miserable squeeze. There birth is insulted—riches overlooked—talent unnoticed—beauty criticized—all that is great and good is neglected for the unharmless fiddle, and the step of the proud and of the noble, dwindles down into the mincing step of the *petit-maitre*. You had better take Rawlinson with you; I never frequent such places.”

"Never mind, Sir Ronald," said Margaret; "I shall represent your house, and Rawlinson, as you call my father, will be the supporter of it."

There was a heavy cloud came over the face of the Baronet; Laura observed it, and turned the conversation by expressing herself rather fatigued. Sir Ronald, without saying a word, turned his horse's head, and Laura was but too happy to follow the example. They returned home without meeting any one; but as Laura was lifted from her saddle, a groom gave her, unobserved, a letter.

CHAPTER X.

THERE was an unusually crowded attendance at the county ball ; most of the nobility and gentry of the surrounding place were there, and all the usual rivalry, all the nice discrimination of rank and place, might be perceptible to the most common observer. Mr. Molesworth, although a rigid clergyman, was there ; he considered innocent recreation no bar to everlasting happiness. He was a man who looked down with the greatest contempt upon those who, being righteous over-much, imagine that any approach to merriment is an insult to their creator. An upright, honest clergyman makes the respectability of the assembly more respectable, and is an example to others, that a cheerful demeanour best shews a grateful heart.

The room was partially full when Lady de Lancy and Laura Mackenzie entered; there was still some black ornament to denote that the allotted fashionable time for affliction had not entirely passed; and fashion, which never makes one wise person for the millions of fools who are dragged to death at her chariot wheels, is imperative either as to the time we should weep, or the dress we should wear.

In that room, crowded as it was with beauty, and such beauty as few ever gazed upon, there was not one fairer in face or form than Laura Mackenzie; the eyes of all the men, found a pleasure in surveying the innocent beauty before them, and a general disposition was manifested to solicit her hand in the dance. There was a master of the ceremonies, a tall elderly man, who seemed half ashamed of his position, and half resigned to his fate. In vain he asked if Miss Mackenzie would allow him to introduce an anxious candidate for the honour. Miss Mackenzie refused, always refused; and Lady de Lancy, like most parvenues, felt a sincere pleasure in finding the girl with

sufficient pride to deny herself a pleasure if purchased at the enormous price of an introduction through the master of the ceremonies ; —without his aid, there was little chance of a partner, for from the seclusion so pertinaciously adhered to in Raven Castle, not a soul entered therein, who had ever indulged his capacious heels in a country dance. Lady de Lancy walked upright and majestically towards the upper end of the room, and enveloped in her dignity, and her silk brocade, sat down in silent grandeur ; her eyes wandered no farther than her fan, whilst those of her young companion were restless and vigilant.

“ You will never mention this subject or this meeting, Mr. Molesworth, until at some future period when I call upon you.”

“ You may rely upon me ; I feel that interest in your behalf, that I will do implicitly as you wish.”

“ You remember the day—”

“ Of that be not afraid ; I have the dates, and the registry. Herbert was a witness and my memory is good, thanks to a prudent life, and

wonderful health. If it serves me long enough to do you the service which you demand, and which I anticipate, I shall lie down in my bed doubly thankful to the great beneficent power, which will enable me, at so advanced a period of my life, to do an act of justice and of retribution.

"I am delighted to see you, Mr. Molesworth," said an old peer; "from the first moment you came amongst us, to this, we have never missed your cheerful countenance at our annual balls. May I beg a moment's conversation with you?" Mr. Molesworth rose and left his former companion alone; a moment afterwards a short stout man took the place. "Well?" he began.

"I have gleaned from him all I desired."

"Don't talk of yourself, my good friend, talk of the cause."

"He remembers," said the stranger, whom Mr. Molesworth had left, "that on a day in spring when the flowers—"

"Oh have pity," interrupted the stranger,

"have pity ; and since you cannot relate what he knows without a rigmarole jumble of spring flowers, do answer my questions, yes, or no, and remember that those monosyllables are more valuable to a lawyer, than all the nose-gays that ever grew near Chelsea, or ever were sold in Covent garden market. Now then, does he remember the date ?"

"He does."

"Do say yes, that's a good man ; has he got possession of the register ?"

"Yes ?"

"That's right !"

"Does he know Herbert by sight ?"

"As well as—"

"Oh stop."

"I beg your pardon—yes."

"Is the other witness alive ?"

"No."

"How old was the present Sir Ronald when it took place."

"Seventeen."

"Does he know the maiden name of the late Lady de Lancy ?"

"No."

“Then do you find that out, and call upon me in London; which is Rawlinson?”

“That short red-headed man, with large fiery whiskers, standing with his back to the fire, as if he were the highest born of this great assembly; whereas, as you know, some families here date from before the birth of Adam.”

“I must say, for a country attorney without any partners in London, he is about as proud as the devil himself; we had better not be seen more together; find out concerning the maiden name; for the rest of the maternal evidence must come from her family.”

“You are surprised, Miss Laura, to see me here no doubt. I was on my road to Raven Castle, when accidentally I heard of this ball; and as I sleep here to-night I was resolved not to be kept awake by the noise without sharing some of the delights. Will you present me to Lady de Lancy, as I must be sheltered some hours under her roof to-morrow?”

“Margaret, this is Mr. Law, the gentleman to whom I am so indebted.”

Margaret's head gave one of those inclina-

tions, which would leave the uninitiated in surgery, to believe that the neck and the back bone were as straight, and as inflexible as a marble pillar.

"I have come down," said Mr. Law, "in order to obtain your final instructions, which it would be better for me to explain myself, than to mystify by writing; your case grows towards a close, and a negociation has been entered into with your uncle, which may, with your approbation, save the public the pleasure of perusing in the newspapers; but there will be a sacrifice to be made on your part."

"Make no sacrifice," said Lady de Lancy. "If it belongs to you, have it; if not, lose it."

"Every person, Lady de Lancy," said Law, "would speak as you speak; but if the case were your own, your opinion would change." Laura was quite astonished, at the cold cutting manner of her friend; his countenance was unchanged; and continuing the discourse, addressing himself to Laura, he said, "is Lady

de Lancy's father here?" she replied in the affirmative.

"He is," continued Law, with provoking coolness, "an attorney I believe."

"He was, Sir," replied Lady de Lancy, with some dignity, "but he has long since withdrawn from so unworthy a profession."

"I'm glad of it," said Mr Law, "for the profession's sake."

"Sir!" ejaculated Lady de Lancy.

"Madam!" responded Mr. Law.

Lady de Lancy rose, and Laura was about to rise, when Mr. Law, took her hand. "Sit down; you are under my care, not hers; you must go with me to-morrow to London; you may have contracted some small debts. I have brought you down one hundred pounds; you will find them in this small case. I have agitated the storm just in time; your stay at Raven Castle, would be hypocrisy—it must not be."

"In you, Mr. Law, I have trusted; tell me why I *must* not stay?"

"Even in this ball room, the best place in

the world to ask questions, I ask this, are you not engaged to be married to Albert de Lancy?"

"With you I have no secrets—I consider myself engaged to him."

"Then why couldn't you say 'yes,' without all that: you must not remain in the house, to which he is an outcast."

"May I ask how you came informed of a secret which no living soul but myself and Albert could know."

"You may ask as many questions as you like, and I shall answer just as many as suits me. Oh here comes the retired attorney, looking as angry as his whiskers are fiery."

Mr. Rawlinson approached with all the consequence of Lady de Lancy's father; he made a haughty kind of bow to Mr. Law, and commenced the conversation by expressing a wish to hear from him, the state of Miss Mackenzie's prospects. Mr. Law immediately sheltered himself behind the confidential communications, which must necessarily have taken place, without prejudice to either party in the

event of a non compliance on either side. His manner was cold and reserved, and Rawlinson, although he made many vigorous attempts to force his new acquaintance into a conversation, was completely baffled by the dry answers of his opponent.

“ You do not dance,” at last said Rawlinson to Laura, “ may I have the pleasure of being your partner ?”

“ If I had thought,” said Law rather maliciously, “ that she would have danced with men of our age, I should have proposed myself ; but I should just as soon have thought of proposing to marry her ?”

“ Indeed,” said Rawlinson.

“ I believe I have a prior claim,” said a young man whose dark countenance betrayed a residence in climates, more under the influence of the sun, than England.

Laura rose instantly and walked to the bottom of the room, taking her modest situation in the dance rather than being first ; and then pushed down lower as the fag ends

of nobility could trace in their families the most distant connection with a coronet.

Mr. Law seeing the surprize of Rawlinson, instantly became more communicative; nay, he wished his advice; he had discovered, in all the answers to the questions he had put in writing, the wisdom of experience.

Flattery soon overcame Rawlinson; like all vain men, he lived upon that nutritious food; he sat down, took legal objections to various parts of the case, commented much upon the certainty of success, and became very communicative. Not so Lady de Lancy, her eyes and her steps followed Laura; the face and features, although altered by the sun, and matured by age, were familiar to her; she traced the likeness to the Jew, and for the first time she remarked that Laura wore a brooch which she remembered to have seen in the box. They spoke with the air of familiarity, and were so busied in their conversation that they never heeded the anxious eye which watched every movement.

Oh love ! whenever thy votaries approach thy holy altar, how dimmed are all the beauties of the surrounding world, how mighty is thy power ! the fiercest sun may blaze on the uncovered head and the heat be despised, the coldest air, which could emanate from the frigid zone be unheeded ! All the luxuries of life, all the most delicious viands, nay, even all the allurements of dress are forgotten, when the lips of the one inspire confidence in thy sacred name !

It was so with Laura ; she had listened to the soul inspiring voice of love ; she saw before her without fear or disguise, the bold, the proud, the commanding Albert de Lancy. To him she had silently pledged her hand and heart, and, before the first five minutes had elapsed, she had confirmed the repeated question and stood before him his affianced bride.

In vain Lady de Lancy endeavoured to draw the attention of her father ; he was busy in legal arguments, anxious to impress Mr. Law with the depth of his learning, and solicitous of being somewhat engaged in a case which

might make him well acquainted with the future expectations of the lady. In vain, however, he sounded in that direction; Mr. Law declared himself quite ignorant of the amount bequeathed in India; and answered evasively all questions which, in the slightest degree, could have reference to money matters. Lady de Lancy endeavoured by divers touches of the sleeves, and a frequent repetition of that familiar name for a father, to draw off the legal antagonist. At each time the hand of the artful attorney warned her not to interrupt a conversation so beneficial to him, and whilst, with anxious ears she listened for a pause, and with more anxious eyes watched Albert, she saw the latter relinquish his place in the dance, and, taking Laura under his protection, walk to a less frequented part of the room. She now became more excited, and stopped a most beautiful quotation from the lawyer's text book by saying petulantly: "Will you never cease; not even if I tell you that Albert de Lancy is in the room."

The words were like magic! it was answered

by one long and improper ejaculation, which shewed the victim, by whom it was uttered, to labour under the pain which people are represented to experience when suffering its agonies.

“ Where, Margaret, where ? ”

“ Look at the man who is sitting with Laura ; time and climate may have altered him, but as surely as my name is Margaret that man is Albert de Lancy.”

Rawlinson looked ; in a moment he recognised him ; he took his daughter aside. “ Stay here as long as you can, and wait my return,” he said. “ Laura’s charms are sufficiently inviting to detain him ; above all things do not seem to recognize him.”

He left the room ; and forcing through the crowd of servants, who peeped into the ball room envying the pleasure they could not enjoy, he called loudly for a chaise ; he hurried the tardy stable boys, and jumping into the rattling vehicle, said to the post boy : “ I will give you a guinea to drive me to Raven Castle in half

an hour, and the same to be equally expeditious in your return." The post boy nodded an affirmative, and in a moment Rawlinson was rapidly retreating from the ball.

CHAPTER XI.

“AND must you leave me then, so soon, Albert? nay this is unkind indeed; you come like a shadow and depart as such; surely, surely you can stay one hour longer.”

Albert looked at his watch; he seemed lost in calculation; when suddenly recollecting himself, and holding the record of life in his hand, said: “In one hour I must positively go; that hour we will turn to good account; firstly as to yourself, I feel confident you will listen to my advice with the attention it deserves; place every confidence in Law, refer to him on all occasions; all our letters must pass through him, and from to-morrow cease to be dependant, and commence a proper affluence. He has money of mine to a large amount; fear not to use it

generously ; the spring which supplies it will not easily dry up ; leave Raven Castle to-morrow ; reside either in London or in your cottage. Be a kind nurse to old Herbert ; and remember that his life is more essential to us, than any living creature breathing. Of our letters and correspondence we have before agreed ; I have now told you the leading parts of your future conduct ; for as surely as that ring which you placed on my finger is there now, so surely will I be your husband, if I am not overtaken by death."

" Albert, your words reassure me ; may I not ask one question ; nay, do not turn away your head—an affianced bride may surely ask the question which is dearest to her. It is of yourself—why not at once openly declare your return to your brother ; be reconciled to him ; and with the fortune you have amassed, and I have almost within my grasp, live quietly and comfortably in our home."

" My oath, my oath !" said Albert hastily, " cursed be the oath which thus unnerves me. Do not start, Laura, it is merely a sacred pro-

mise I have made to return within a certain time ; and the pleasure you have pictured, makes me feel more bitterly the obligation of my absence."

" That casket which you left—what am I to do with that?"

" Law will claim it to-morrow, and you will give it to him; select from it all you want, all you require ; it is yours ; but you would find it difficult to withdraw from Raven Castle without the presence of our friend."

" And am I never to hear of your strange wanderings ; am I never, dear Albert, to listen to your eventful life, to learn how you mastered the first struggles of poverty, how when nearly taken as a deserter, for I verily believe you were the man, that now I find you with jewels enough to purchase an independency for life, with any sum I may require placed in the hands of Mr. Law?"

Albert drew a deep sigh and answered evasively. " The time *may* come when all this wonder may be revealed; our time grows short. I hear my horse's feet pawing the ground, and

he has far to go, before I stop this night. Again Laura pledge me your love; and swear, for mind you have no parents to controul you; your age is sufficient to make you aware of the sacred obligation of an oath! By all above, by all your hopes in this world and the next, swear to be mine!"

Laura looked him full in the face, with all the animation of a love inspired girl; she answered, "I swear."

"That is sufficient; now about Lady de Lancy; she has been kind to you and you must not be ungrateful. Tell her of our attachment; and bid her choose any jewel, but that fabulous plume, as a remembrance of *you*; of me, she may keep the imitation stones, as false as her own heart; however much I may despise and loathe her, I would have you be grateful and sincere. Whatever may happen for the future, she must then exonerate you, for you are in ignorance of the cloud already bursting over her; ask me no questions excepting of my love to you; on that subject be profuse of your inquiries. Let not any ap-

parent mystery close those rosy lips, or any false delicacy rob you of your words ; all that concerns you on that subject you have a right to demand ; you know my birth, you know my relations, and you have a just idea of my riches ; once more, be not ungrateful either to Sir Ronald or Margaret ; answer all their questions frankly, fearlessly ; and above all, whatever she may say to you, let no unkind word fall from those dear lips whereon all is sweetness and honey."

" Very pretty indeed, Albert, but not the words I would hear when you propose to part ; tell me of your return, when I shall see you again, and more than that, if *I* may ask, when you unasked should say, when is your promise to be fulfilled ?"

" The question is a fair one, which I should have anticipated ; but the answer is unsatisfactory, inasmuch as I cannot mention an exact period ; the wind may be scant, the voyage unpropitious ; a thousand circumstances may force me from my course ; but you shall ever guide me, and my only wish shall be a hasty return,

I had forgotten ; Law knows our alliance, our promised alliance ; but remember, on any other subject, he is ignorant ; ask him not concerning my pursuits ; it is useless ; he can only tell you that I have property and he may mention the amount. Hark ! every moment the music ceases, how that generous horse expresses his anxiety to be gone ! Turpin's black mare might be its equal, but not its superior."

In the meantime, Rawlinson had arrived without notice ; he burst into Sir Ronald's study—he was in tears, sitting in a pensive mood, looking into his fire as if to trace in that burning furnace the reality of his apprehension. The proud man was subdued, not by others, but by himself ; he had climbed to an eminence from the summit of which he dared not look down. The alteration in his care-worn countenance, now that grief rendered the furrows more deep, astonished and confounded his intruder ; but impertinence and forward importance soon overcame his first surprise.

" Quick," he began, " Sir Ronald give me a warrant, a magistrate's warrant, for the appre-

hension of a deserter ; I will fill it up—here is a pen—there must not be a moment's delay."

" Against whom—and who is the man who prays for it ?"

" Against Albert ; he is at the ball—the general nature of the offence is sufficient for the warrant, and any one's evidence of his identity will convict him. There must be no time lost—men who masquerade in Jewish beard are quick in their change of domicile—his must be the county goal."

" Would you have *me*—his brother, sign his commitment—would you have me, already his great enemy, become his greatest foe ? I will not do it."

" By heavens, you shall, or you shall be liable for the refusal. I will swear to him as a deserter—I accuse him of a theft ; what ! have you lost your courage at the very moment it is most important to preserve it ;—the warrant—or the haughty Sir Ronald may dwindle down into a convict."

" Against my own brother ;—never, never !"

" Cannot your deep reading supply a greater

example from the Roman history; the sacrifice of a son by a father, for instance: is all your boasted courage come to this—to weep like a woman in seclusion, and tremble like a detected thief in public;—be for one moment a man—sign it—leave the rest to me.”

“I will not, I am already too deep in misery, to plunge further. Let him be brought here—I will restore him his due, and I will gladly work as he has done, to keep this miserable life which I fear to sacrifice; oh heavens! that the days of youthful innocence, the joys, the matchless joy [of one hour’s boyhood could but be mine!”

“Do you think I am going to risk my life, with a man—a boy in heart, who trembles to pursue the path he has chosen. Since you refuse the warrant, I will forge your name—you have forged your father’s to a much more important document; dare to deny the signature, and the next moment I will brand you with a crime, most easy to be proved.”

“By God,” said Sir Ronald, as he sprang upon Rawlinson and seized him by the throat,

"hell has no torments like your presence—you liar—you villain—ten thousand times cursed—you infamous cold-blooded, cold-hearted viper; hear me before I strangle you; is the deed still in existence? answer, or by all that is just, this moment is your last."

In spite of the ferocious look and the firm grasp, Rawlinson smiled—the hold was released, or at least relaxed, "you seemed to find it difficult in your historical researches," he said with a malicious sneer, "to discover an instance, in which a father destroyed his son; what think you of a parricide?"

"Trifle not with me, Rawlinson, for I am a desperate man. You have hedged me in as a bear encircled by many men; at one bound I may be free; beware I do not spring upon you—I will not sign this warrant, and you dare not forge my name. Begone, or I may have a further crime upon my head."

"I am not very apprehensive of that," replied the attorney; "an enraged bear is alarming enough, but the cool huntsmen always succeed. You are blinded by impotent rage,

the cold calculating Baronet—the haughty, and imperious master is become a child, a mere plaything; remember the tie which has bound us together may easily be snapped asunder; then to whom can you turn for shelter or for succour. I have not been the improvident man you suppose me, and I can at all times escape; nay, my name, if I valued such a plebeian appellation as the one I now rejoice in, would be lost in the aristocratic sound of Sir Ronald de Lancy; and whilst the public read with the greedy avidity of all hunters after scandal, your miserable unnatural baseness, no one would harm me more than is usually done, when they say a man is an attorney. Think of that, proud fallen man—think of your name being read by all who can read. What think you of the compassion, the tender compassion of Mr. Molesworth—the ominous shake of the head of all your tenants—the horror of parents as they name you to their children as a character to be hated—despised—shunned, and then a prayer to follow, that none of their children might be so black—so degraded as yourself.”

If vengeance could have been glutted in words Rawlinson had taken a surfeit; no dagger's points envenomed in the deadliest poison ever rankled more in a wound than had the last speech of the attorney; the truth was vividly felt, and the crest fallen Baronet fell back on his chair and covered his face with his hands. Rawlinson watched him with an eye of contempt, and taking the warrant from a drawer in which he was accustomed to look for magisterial convictions; he coolly and deliberately filled it up, then looking round at his scared companion in guilt, he said coolly, "Will you sign it?"

"Never, as I live, never."

"That's enough," said Rawlinson, "it is done, and so well that no one would believe your oath if you denied it—be prepared for to-morrow—for to-morrow we must have an explanation of some trifling points, of this evening's remarks." He carefully folded up the warrant and saying, "I think Blackburn would be the best officer to execute this," he banged the door and rushed down stairs.

Sir Ronald had remained in the position above described ; the noise of the door seemed to release him from his fears ; he rose deliberately and taking some keys which were upon his table, he opened a drawer, from which he took a single key, and from a drawer seldom remarked, even by Rawlinson's quick eyes, he took a case of pistols ; he looked at them carefully and with a steady unwavering hand, he loaded them—he placed them on the table and reaching the large bible, opened it—his eyes fell upon the beautiful description in St. Luke, of the birth of Christ ; he read it, but even then he discredited it—the fact was above his comprehension, and what he could not comprehend he would not believe. Restless and impatient, he took down a Shakespeare—the man whose words are treasured up like those of holy writ, whose every remark is founded on the deepest knowledge of human nature, who tickles us with pleasure, and scares us by crime ; whose language has in itself a charm, for it defies imitation, it stands alone—unrivalled—inimitable. He opened the book

at the third act of Hamlet, and his eyes fell upon the passage .

“To die, to sleep ;

To sleep ;—perchance to dream ; ay, there’s the rub :

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,

Must give us pause :”—

“If,” Sir Ronald murmured to himself, “I could find but one such passage as this, with all its heart’s acknowledged truth, sanctioning suicide, I could not face that morrow, or see the man, by whose artifice and words I was led into crime. Death in itself is nothing—the sleep of each day’s life—the abode in which the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest ; it is the relinquishing of sorrow—anguish—care—fear, all the fretful and vexatious circumstances of existence for the quiet and retirement of the grave.

“But ’tis the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourne
No traveller returns,—puzzles the will.”

“ I dare not do it, with all the crimes upon my head, without a prospect of salvation, if there is an hereafter; and the worthless remnants of a rotten heart, feeding the pampered worm, the most loathsome of all reptiles, who seems to live an everlasting life, defying even the spade which separates its body, if there be none. Worse than all imaginable evils which the poor brain of drivelling men can devise, is the forlorn and desperate hope of the wicked—that there may be no hereafter. The seed which dies and rots, springs again into the life—the withered leaf which clings upon the hardy oak with all the tenacity of existence through the cold and cheerless winter, is pushed from its place by the forthcoming witness of spring—all nature revives, and shall man who sees in every year that passes the picture of his own existence be denied the greatest blessing. My reason prompts me to believe it—but my pride mayhap, my fears deny it. I could bear to part with her to whom I was forced to ally myself—but for my son, that poor innocent child, doomed perhaps to starve, from his

father's wickedness. I must not act so cowardly a part, and yet to-morrow, the shame of discovery—the finger post of scorn—the dread, the continued dread of each moment's existence overbalances all future apprehension. Come then my last refuge, it is a cowardly act, but it is justified in one who drags about him the everlasting remembrance of his shame." He took the pistol and cocked it, twice he placed it against his forehead, and twice he withdrew it. "I will not go hence without a prayer," he said, "I may yet commend my soul to him whose awful existence I have discredited until now." He knelt down and prayed for forgiveness; in that prayer, his brother's name mingled with that of his own child, and the very partner of his life, and her father was not omitted; he rose, resolved to finish, by one slight touch, all his mental agonies, when he was interrupted by the sudden entrance of his wife.

"The prey has escaped," she said as she burst into the room, "my father was five minutes too late, and now a straw may remove us from Raven Castle—your delay has occa-

sioned this misfortune, and danger upon danger multiplies; Laura is engaged to Albert—her solicitor is here—she leaves us to-morrow—Molesworth has heard the long eager conversation of Albert, and cast his chilling eye upon me.”

“Look here,” said Sir Ronald, “it is but this.” She struck the weapon from his hand, and the ball passed harmless through the window.

CHAPTER XII.

"WHAT! would you play the Roman's part and die upon your sword," said Rawlinson, as he entered the room; "what a coward are you to fly from your post before you are relieved; it is quite sufficient time to go *there*," he added as he pointed to the ground, "when we are summoned. Leave us, Margaret, I will be guarantee for his safety; there, the priming of the other pistol is removed, and the weapon is harmless. Go you to Laura; use your utmost endeavours to shake her resolution about going to-morrow; and if she consents but to one day, we may make her another man's wife."

"Where is Albert, where is my brother," asked Sir Ronald, as his wife left the room;

“ let us, Rawlinson, do the wiser act—reconcile him to us by a restoration of his property, whilst we retire to some distant country, or some unknown retreat, and there live out our lives in penitence and prayer.”

“ Poor miserable man,” said Rawlinson, “ unfit for any great action, proud in security, trembling in adversity,—why I, Rawlinson, the attorney, the man you despised, even look upon you with contempt; and had I known that such a craven heart throbbed in that bosom, I would have given my daughter to Albert, and sent you to a strange country.”

“ I confess it all; if I were right, no man could be firmer, but being in the wrong, I am the meanest coward alive; my mind is made up, even if it leads me to the gallows. I will restore the property, which but for your extravagance would have been returned with faithful stewardship. I feel that I must relieve my mind of its load, or sink under the burthen; I give you warning to save yourself in time, for by the dawn, I will be moving in search of Albert.”

"Promise me one thing before I go.—Those pistols,—you understand me?"

"The fit is passed ; I will do a nobler act than suicide, you may rely upon me. On my honour I would sooner shoot you than myself."

"You are very kind indeed, but I thought *I* was executor to your will, and consequently, ought to out-live you."

"Most certainly ; for the world would then applaud my foresight, in having selected you to carry into effect my last unnatural and envenomed desires ;—good night, it is useless our bandying words, my mind feels lighter, even at the expression of my determination."

"Then pray exhaust yourself in words now, as sailors feel themselves relieved if they spout out a volley of unmeaning oaths ; good night."

Rawlinson left the Baronet, and retired to his own house.

Brightly rose the sun next day ; Laura was up an hour before her time, busied in preparing for her departure ; and scarcely had she began,

when Lady de Lancy entered; there was an anxious quickness about her, and her hurried manner attracted even the attention of Laura.

"I have much to say," she began. "Laura, I must accuse you of some duplicity; how could you have known so much concerning Albert, as to have been engaged to him?"

"I will tell you frankly, openly; I first saw him as you know on the morning of your wedding—he was young, ardent, handsome, wretched—I pitied him, and when you sent me as a kind of peace-maker between your husband and him, I admired his noble qualities, even in his wish for revenge. Before we parted, I gave him at his request, a ring. When Herbert was driven from Raven Castle—nay, do not interrupt me—he came down into Cornwall, to reside amongst some old relations, Time had swept them all away, there had been no communication held for years between the parties, and when the old and faithful servant came to the cottage, of those who in early life he had loved, he found the tenement deserted—the roof fallen in, the useless door

half burnt by poor wretches, who in winter shiver for want of fire, the bare walls alone remaining, and scarcely enough white-wash thereon, to warrant the belief that they were once inhabited. He had little money, and was much fatigued, he sat down by the wayside, and there remained asking every passenger who passed, tidings of those who once resided there. He was soon convinced that further search was useless, that the hand of death had been upon the dwelling; not one remained, not one to welcome back the old and valued friend of their youth. The old servant, grey-headed, worn down by affliction, sat by the road side. I happened to pass, for the cottages were near to ours, and in the last days of the old inhabitants, I had enjoyed the happiness of contributing to their comforts; Herbert recognized me, he told me a circumstance had occurred—why are you so agitated, Margaret?"

"It is nothing, my dear, pray go on, it is merely a little sickness, arising from our dissipation last night."

"Well, a circumstance had occurred, which would for ever be kept a secret by him."

“ Ah !” ejaculated Lady de Lancy, “ let me open the window, the air may revive me ; now I feel better—continue.”

“ Which had obliged him to leave Sir Ronald’s services ; I was surprised at his great distress, for he had scarcely a farthing ; his clothes were torn, as if by branches, and my first idea was, that he had lost his reason, and run from Raven Castle ; his words, however, soon convinced me to the contrary ; with the little money we could collect, and through the kindness of the landlord, one of those cottages were soon habitable. Herbert became its inmate, and every day of my life I visited him ; there was a charm, a secret, undefinable charm in his conversation, for it was ever on one subject, Albert. Albert to him was all that was good, noble, just and generous ; and often would the old man say, how, from my disposition, I should suit him as a friend—nay, I will be frank, a wife. He spoke warmly at all the prospects of poverty and wretchedness which would attend his first struggle in life ; but his sure conviction, that he would rise superior to all difficulties, and live to be an

honour to the name of de Lancy. Whenever I urged him to explain why he had left your service, his face grew dark with displeasure, but he never answered.

“ It was about a year after I first met Herbert, that Albert spoke to me from the road side ; I knew his voice in an instant, and my heart throbbed within me ; his object was to find Herbert, and he succeeded.”

“ They scarcely ever met,” interrupted Lady de Lancy.

“ They never met ; but he often wrote ; he had found the direction, and he established a correspondence. I saw the letters, not one escaped me ; in every one, there was warmth of affection towards myself, which made me long for each day’s post, as if each day he would have written ; still every thing was a mystery ; letters arrived, sometimes from the West Indies, sometimes from the Mediterranean ; and the orders concerning the answers were always varying ; once they were to be sent to Barbadoes, once to Jamaica, then to the Havana ; sometimes to other foreign ports, and

occasionally to those in England; the direction always varied, sometimes as to name—indeed, in this respect, not one was ever to the same person.

“From Herbert’s answers, which I occasionally wrote, sprung up the intimacy between us. In all his letters, the following words, after expressions of the warmest affection, terminated the letter—“Mind, I place you as a guard, as a protector to her, who is dearer to me than my life.” Soon money was sent in the letters; so much indeed, as to render any assistance from me perfectly useless. Herbert became richer than either my mother or myself; and his wish to invest it in a small freehold, which he now enjoys, brought him acquainted with Mr. Law. Six months afterwards, a regular salary was paid by that worthy man. From whom it came, he could not tell; but a sum was invested in the funds, and a power of attorney was given or rather sent, to Law, desiring him to receive the interest, and appropriate it to the maintenance of Herbert; the name signed, was Albert Mornay.

“ It was through Herbert, that my residence here was known. When the Jew appeared, he showed me my ring, and you remember, I accepted it; he gave me a locket—look here,” she struck the secret spring, and all doubt vanished from Lady de Lancy’s mind, for there was the living image of Albert, just as she had known him; she sighed heavily, and bade Laura continue. “ The jewels, which he left are mine; and in case of any objection on your part to allow such valuable property to be removed, as it was left under your care ostensibly, he directed my attention to a small spring which opens a drawer; and here is the gift in his own hand writing. I never saw this until the next day, although he pointed out the spring whilst you were examining the false jewel. In mentioning all this, do not accuse me of duplicity; I was bound, by my word of honour, expressed in silence, whilst he was here, and by a letter, which I wrote to him the next day, never to reveal one word, until he liberated me from the engagement, to which I had so solemnly pledged myself; last night, that obligation was

removed. I may answer any of your questions in the most unreserved manner, and my gratitude to you for all your numerous acts of kindness, more especially since you gave me the locket, gives my tongue unshackled liberty. Through me, he knew of this ball last night, and he saw Herbert three days since ; I know not how long I am to wait, but I hope the day is not far distant, when this truant—this man, almost blessed with ubiquity, will become a more tangible person.”

“ Where is he now ? ” asked Lady de Lancy, as if a sudden thought had struck her.

“ On my honour I am perfectly incapable of answering the question. I am denied even to ask that question ; do not look so incredulously, I would swear any oath, however dreadful, that I do not know further than this, that my letter which I send to day, is to be directed to Port Patrick, and a duplicate one to Penzance.”

And continued Lady de Lancy, “ under what name.”

“ Captain Watson.”

“ Of what ? does he command a ship ? ”

"The direction you shall see, it is merely Captain Watson, to be kept at the post office until called for, and all the letters are post paid."

"Do not leave me to-day, Laura, I am so sad, I cannot bear to part with you, besides, I should like to hear again this romantic tale. The time I thought was passed when lovers came in disguise, and were only to be recognized by their amorous mistresses; and love so constant, has ever been rare. He was dressed last night equal to any lord in the land, and if his riches are to be estimated by his dress, and his ring, he must have amassed a large fortune; besides, that pedlar's box is in itself a large sum, and would realize an independency."

"He has never said one word to me of either his riches, or his means whereby he has been so successful; but I should think he must be employed in some trade abroad, for as you may have remarked, his face which was fair, is browned by the sun, and he wears the general appearance of a man who has lived long in warm climates."

“ It is a mystery. Dress, Laura, dress, you will soon have your lawyer by your side ; you must not go hence to-day.”

“ It depends upon the necessity of my removal ; but believe me, Margaret, no words of mine can convey to you how truly, how sincerely, I am your debtor. The time can never come that will enable me to repay it ; but I shall cherish you as a friend, as sincere as you are disinterested.”

“ Away, dear Laura, with all such words. I have been the gainer by your misfortunes, as they made me your companion. I have a fancy and you will gratify it I know ; give me that old ring ; not the one the Jew received and gave, but this—its stone is the emblem of constancy Laura, if the time should come that I have a request to make which cannot hurt you and may benefit me—will you, if I send or show this pledge of our friendship, grant it ?”

“ I will. You seem to doubt me ; by that heaven to which I point, I swear to grant it. What ? do you think me so base, so ungrateful to deny you that which cannot hurt

myself and benefit you. I would do that to the commonest beggar in the street, and to my friend, I do not think I am likely to deny it ; take the ring, Margaret, I wish it was a more valuable one—to me it is above all price, it was my mother's, and all I beg of you is, should you be summoned by death before me that you will desire its return. There, let me put it on your finger ; remember I have promised, and I wish the time might come to put my promise to the test."

" I pray it may never come," said Margaret, in a deep and hollow voice, " and if it does, I pray I may not lose my friend. Quick to your toilette ; we have chased away an hour or two, by words."

Laura was in the breakfast room half an hour earlier than usual ; she there found Rawlinson, he did not allow many moments to fleet away before he began, " I had last night a long conversation with Mr. Law—he is a quick intelligent man, one worthy of your confidence, but a little self-willed—it is perhaps the fault of great men—your affairs in that quarter, will, I

hope, prosper, but in another affair in which the heart is more concerned than the head, I doubt your prosperity."

Laura blushed ; she, however, soon recovered herself, "and why Mr. Rawlinson should you doubt my happiness with one, of whom I have heard you speak so highly?"

"There is a mystery about the man which renders his character far from enviable. Excuse me, I speak as your best friend ; love blinds the wisest of us—we must then see with the eyes of others. Consider for a moment ; the man to whom you have allied yourself by your promise is of such a character, that even now there is an order, it is called a warrant, for his apprehension as a deserter, nay, as a thief."

"You cannot mean, Mr. Rawlinson, in your daughter's house to insult me by branding the man I have selected as my husband with such opprobrious names."

"I would not insult you, I would save you. To satisfy you beyond a doubt, look at this paper and see if the description of the man

here specified, is in accordance with him. Remark the date—the age—the dress, but above all, the name, Albert Mortimer. This is a description of a deserter from the Doris, a ship to which I have traced him. Sir Ronald in the list of deserters, which is sent to the different sea-ports and magistrates on the coast, observed this name. He felt deeply for his brother—he was anxious to save him, to replace him in his proper position, and he employed me to trace him, if I could, from the moment he left this house. I have reason to believe he volunteered for the navy; went on board a cutter which was off a harbour close to this, was entered on board the Doris, and deserted from her, having first suffered a severe punishment for an offence unknown to gentlemen, and which he afterwards practised upon myself—theft.”

Laura placed her hands upon her ears, and screamed rather than said, “I will not hear another word;—it must be false—it shall be untrue—I would not credit such a report; nay, Mr. Rawlinson, not if I heard him confess it—Albert a deserter—a thief!”

"Both," replied Rawlinson, "and at this moment if he appeared here, he would be apprehended as such ; a moment's reason, fair Laura ; if every thing was without blot or fear of detection, why should he come here disguised as a Jew?"

"A wish to see me, undiscovered."

"Very good and quickly expressed ; but last night he came determined, I suppose, to be discovered ; where is he now ?"

Laura paused, and looked confused.

"How comes a man in three short years, to be possessed of wealth equal to that diamond plume which the crafty Israelite swore was Montezuma's. Eight thousand pounds would not purchase that to-morrow, besides the rest which amount to four times that amount. Does it not strike you as astonishing, that a man so much in love—one who travels so far to see the object of his heart's best choice ; for here he has chosen wisely, with an adequate fortune to support him and his chosen wife, should jump upon a horse attended by one servant, and—of him more in a minute—and gallop away at the dead of night ; why having

discovered himself and left off the Jewish masquerade of a lover, did he not remain here to day?"

"His business perhaps."

"Aye, his business; can you tell me what that business is?"

How suspicious is love, and yet how slow, how unwilling to believe! Margaret had hinted at this; but like most women in conversation, had gone from one subject to the other without fixing the mind upon any particular one. The crafty attorney knew human nature better; he alarmed the mind first, and then, by closely following up his train of suspicion, made her shrink, in spite of her obstinacy to discredit it.

"You seem lost in thought—I have not half awakened you to your danger. The servant who accompanied him was a sailor; those amphibious animals can no more conceal themselves than the long crocodile can his scales, although he never once opened his mouth excepting to answer his master, which he did in English. Every man in the yard will swear to his profession. Why this silence? why all

these precautions? the man was neither deaf nor dumb; if there was nothing to conceal, silence was unnecessary; the master was known at the inn, who does not know Albert de Lancy in this vicinity? yet all questions as to whence he came, and whither he was going was answered by a nod of the head, as if to imply the man was dumb, and yet he was heard to speak to his master."

Laura sighed deeply; she sat down and fixed her eyes as if in thought; Rawlinson took her hand. "Laura," he began, "you are yourself too great a gem to be cast at random into the power of such a merchant; he would barter you to a Mexican for another, or having married you, he would disappear with your money; there is another whose character will bear the minutest investigation, who loves you more sincerely than this man, who, though of good birth, is discarded by his family, and left to gain a livelihood by means which common prudence prompts him to conceal."

Laura was silent—her faith was shaken, the earnest manner of Rawlinson had succeeded; he

saw it, and like an able advocate followed up his first advantage.

“Have you forgotten,” he continued, “the Spaniard who accompanied the Jew ; remember the mistake of putting the child instead of the guitar into the bag—both child and guitar make horrible noises ;—cannot you see through this ?”

“What can you mean ?” said Laura.

“Simply, my child, this,—to remove the child from this world of trial and vexation, and to be himself the heir to this property, of which the birth of that child for ever excludes him. Would you, a girl of your unrivalled beauty, of your soft and delicate mind, marry a man who could harbour such a thought ?”

“He could not do it ; there is no proof of the Spaniard knowing him.”

“No !—then pray how came my coat returned to me, which Albert took by force, by the Spaniard ? How came they to go out together when that miserable foreigner was paid by me to sing to you ?”

“ Good God ! good God ! ” said Laura, “ how my head throbs, and my heart aches.”

“ They are easily cured—dismiss him for ever; never let him come near you until he can account to you, or to his brother, for his extraordinary conduct. The man who would steal a coat, would not hesitate to rob another of his jewels;—the man who could harbour such a thought as the death or the abduction of an infant, would not allow his wife, though she was as fair as Laura Mackenzie with all her sweetness and innocence, to be in his path one second after she became an obstacle to some caprice or deed. You are to write to him one letter east, the other west, under a feigned name; are you now convinced? I implore you, Laura, cast away that loathsome weed, and give to those, who can better prize it, the blessing of your hand;”—he kissed it—“believe this which I have long regarded as my last hope, is much too valuable to be given to a deserter and a thief,”

Laura withdrew her hand—love, like her’s,

although greatly alarmed, was not likely to veer round like the treacherous wind before and during the hurricane ; she knew not what to do—she flew to Margaret to unburthen her mind, and she found her more fierce than Rawlinson, and a warm advocate in her father's cause.

CHAPTER XIII.

How difficult is it to shake love, once founded upon the firm ground of probable hope ; then, every moment increases the appetite ; there is not a moment in the day that does not contribute to feed the flame ; but once allow jealousy or distrust to enter into the mind, and soon all the golden dreams of future affluence, all the imaginations of future pleasures, fade away ; and as the poet says

“ It’s then delightful misery no more,
But unmixed agony, incessant gall,
Corroding every thought, and blasting all love’s paradise.”

It was but a sorry morning for her, who, the night before, had experienced all the joys of

affianced love ; the opened unreserved confidence with which she had spoken—the eager manner she had listened to every word which fell from his lips, and now scarcely had a few hours passed and she was miserable, a wretched being, having partially lost her own esteem, and being unable to esteem him any longer. The only hope was in Mr. Law, and he had not yet arrived.

In the mean time the gaunt figure of Sir Ronald had walked into the breakfast room. He had been out early in the morning, and returned apparently somewhat pleased with his excursion. If those straight compressed lips could ever denote a smile, there seemed to be one as his eyes fell upon Rawlinson ; the latter looked up and with careless indifference said.

“ Pleasant ride this morning, but rather unsuccessful.”

“ My mind is easier ; I feel myself already released of a load.”

“ Then your horse must be the bearer of it, for certainly you have not unburthened yourself to any one else.”

"He is gone, and like Macbeth, I may say of Banquo's ghost, being gone, 'I am myself again.'"

"Early rising, rapid rides, hilly walks, are all conducive to good health, when a man generally possesses that great blessing, '*mens sano in corpora sana.*' This being now your case, we may resume our conversation about this matter. This brother of yours is likely to give us some trouble, and this Law is merely a spy upon us."

"I could revenge myself," said Sir Ronald, "even upon a worm, for my folly last night. Sufficient for the day, be the evil thereof. I am sorry, sincerely sorry that I ever embarked in this bad affair. I should have been a happier man if Albert had been here; to me the riches are useless; one quarter of the sum would suffice to make me envied by others, for there is a mean happiness even in this. All my wants, all my wishes, a few thousand a year would command. The rest is a burthen, the heavier because badly acquired."

"Sir Ronald you have talked in that strain

quite long enough. Like a criminal about to be executed, you regret the apparently trivial deed which leads to the gallows, not on account of the deed but from the detection of the crime. It is the fear of that detection which keeps most men honest, for many use the old saying of the backgammon players, 'it is never a blot until it is hit;' upon this principle our's is no blot, and we may as well continue the game until death throws doublets, and takes us all off."

"It is useless; all your arguments, all your old raked up rubbish, to constitute a saying. I regret it, and ever shall, and if I could see Albert I think I could restore him his wealth under a promise of secrecy;—my mind—my conscience"—

"Your what?" said Rawlinson, bursting into a laugh. "Your conscience—come—come no man should ever talk on a subject of which he is ignorant. Let us have some breakfast, and in the mean time let it be agreed to show Law all, and more than he wishes to see; let him dive into any mystery, but keep Laura

here ; through her we may yet discover Albert's resources, and how he acquires his wealth ; we have a strong case against him, and if we could but hit upon him unawares, Blackburn might quiet all minds in a moment."

Sir Ronald rose hastily from his seat ; he fixed his fierce eyes upon his guest, surveyed the cheerless countenance, as if studying the heart of the man, then said " Rawlinson, you must either be the devil, or—"

" A philosopher," interrupted the wretch ; " now remember this train of argument, Sir Ronald, and see how much superior I am to yourself. I am a rogue, that is according to the law of the land I may be considered as such. I embark in a scheme—my eyes quite open to all the consequences—I succeed. I grow rich—the world, its cares and its labours I relinquish. I spend my life like a gentleman—I sleep when I am so disposed—I walk when it suits my convenience. Now supposing that all this while, I carried about me a certain load, not inconveniently heavy, but one which if I laid down I should have to lie down with it,

and with all the luxuries I have mentioned befettered, tried, condemned, executed, which do you imagine to be the wiser course—to court all the disadvantages I have related, and become a bye word and a scorn by the folly of my own tongue, or live on quietly, and when the storm begins to lower, and the clouds are visible, leave a harbour in which there is an insecure shelter, and go to another where the population began from people in the same situation, and where they sing with great applause, tantarara, rogues all ?”

“ That last hope is a cordial; no one likes to die, having a conviction that his past life has been one large blot; the confession, the death-bed repentance, come too late, and although consoling are not convincing—”

“ What fear you in death, have you not often said, that after death, there is a total annihilation ?”

“ I have *said* so, and I wish I could believe it; make me but certain of that which to me is uncertainty, and when I get old, you may hang me to yon tree to save even the aches and miseries which ever crowd on age. Have

you ever thought, Rawlinson, that you might go mad, and in the frenzy of your distempered mind, blab out the whole to some smooth faced doctor, who would gain immense credit by informing the public of the cause of your disorder?"

"I have very often thought," said Rawlinson, "that you were mad, and nothing would surprise me less than having my thoughts confirmed. I can shave and blister your head, and might bleed and purge you into health again. One word, are you the man you were, or are you going to play the child; give me due notice of your determination, and if you like to hang yourself, pray do so, but do not destroy the pleasure of the amusement by sharing it with me?"

Nothing could daunt Rawlinson; he was a born villain improved upon by a legal education. It had often been said, that the devil would be ten times worse than he is, if you could only article him to an attorney, because then he would evade the law, under the sanction of the judge, and become a worthy member of society; as he is, the cloven foot betrays him

at every step, and being aware of his presence the company become suspicious. Rawlinson would cheerfully have hung Sir Ronald, if he could have done it without compromising himself; and had his daughter, or any one else, who knew his secret dangled with him, it would not have cost him more tears than a moment might have dried. In his own mind, he had shaped his course, he waited quietly for events, and never felt inclined to forestall public curiosity. Not so, Sir Ronald, he was in sincerity changed, he feared the exhibition of his crime, and he had read sufficient to be aware, that sooner or later, crimes are discovered. Whilst his brother was poor, he was innoxious; the moment he became rich, he became a powerful adversary; every man around the estate was more sincerely attached to him than to Sir Ronald. The Molesworths kept entirely aloof; and since the business of Blackburn, the Baronet and rector had never met.

At the church porch, that rendezvous of all country visitors, where, after a sermon, a dress is discussed, or a party originated, even there,

where common civility tempts one to bow to the other, where differences often are healed, and hatreds and jealousies engendered, Lady de Lancy walked like a woman with the plague, every one being afraid to come within reach of her breath. She had remarked it; who can avoid remarking contempt in his neighbour? she was woman enough not to force herself upon her enemies, but to treat them all as if they were unfit for her society, and walking proudly along to her carriage, never looked to the right or the left. The charity girls were astounded at her grandeur, and curtsied lower to her than to the rest. She was prudent enough to buy this honour by distributing certain sums to the parents; these therefore swelled the lists of her dependants, and being thus saluted, she marched proudly to her residence. Time had not changed the disposition of her neighbours, and the de Lancys were hated and despised. Sir Ronald was voted a gloomy monster, Margaret an up-start parvenue. It is quite wonderful how fertile the human imagination

becomes, when a pretty woman is assailed by her own sex.

The arrival of Mr. Law changed the conversation. Sir Ronald treated him with the precautions air of a well bred man, although his words seemed measured, and pompous; still the gentleman was conspicuous in every sentiment. The legal man became prepossessed in his favour—that is, as far as his manners were concerned. Rawlinson was a beautiful foil for the Baronet; he was boisterous, impetuous, rude, and hasty. Lady de Lancy scarcely noticed him, beyond common civility; but Laura, who considered his arrival as provisions thrown into a half starved garrison, exhibited all the warmth of her feelings by the sincerity of her welcome.

Law's quick eyes were every where; nothing escaped him; he spoke only when addressed, answered as shortly as possible, and refused to partake of the meal, having previously breakfasted. Like most men, not accustomed to the halls of the rich, Law's eyes surveyed the furni-

ture ; he examined some ancient armour, which bristled over the side board, it was the same one a former de Lancy had worn, when with his king of celebrated memory, he fought against the Saracens ; around the room this warlike record of the ancestors was preserved, whilst over the mantel piece was the portrait of a lady. The painting was, comparatively speaking fresh, and Law stood some time scrutinizing the picture.

“ You seem pleased with that portrait, Mr. Law ? ” Sir Ronald began ; “ it is an excellent and speaking likeness of my dear mother ; I never remember to have seen any portrait which so completely conveyed the woman herself to the spectator.”

“ It is a beautiful picture ; but it is a curious dress selected for one so highly born as Lady de Lancy ; generally the great bedeck themselves in all the pride of ancestry—the men in armour and the ladies in silks stiff enough to support them, even if their legs failed.”

“ It was the dress in which my father first saw her. Her history is so well known, that I

never conceal it even from strangers ; nor do I consider it a greater blot on our escutcheon, than is found in many families of high distinction. Her beauty attracted my father, and he married the simple peasant girl."

" The countenance," said Law musing, " is not such as would lead the spectator to guess her a native of Wales."

" Neither was she, my father was in London during the parliament, and in one of his rambles, he went to Merriworth in Kent."

" Oh ! my respected son-in-law," said Rawlinson, giving a look to Sir Ronald, admonitory of the dangerous ground upon which he was treading. " Do not treat us with the birth, parentage, education, residence or relationship of your excellent and exemplary mother ; it will last until noon, and perhaps be neither instructive or amusing."

" In that respect, I differ from my learned brother," said Mr. Law ; " the rise of all people, from apparent insignificancy to a proud situation is always amusing, and must be instructive ; we have seen Empresses deport

themselves with all the dignity of those whose pride of birth might have rendered them superior had not nature been as sure an instructress as fashion. Pray continue, Sir Ronald."

"When Rawlinson is absent," said the Baronet, "perhaps I may continue it; perhaps, Mr. Law, you can tell me in which direction I am to seek for my brother, whose truant disposition renders him as difficult to find, as a deserted negro by a planter?"

"I cannot give you the slightest information, Sir Ronald; he never visited me before a week past, and he has left me now as ignorant of his address, as of his probable return."

"I suppose, Mr. Law," said Rawlinson with a winning smile, "he has left instructions concerning his marriage settlements; a man of his enormous wealth would scarcely marry without being bountiful in this respect?"

"My client's instructions," replied the little man very coolly, "are always sacred with me, and as for his wealth, he never troubled me with any description of his resources."

"Which seem extensive," added Rawlinson.

"I am in ignorance of all but the appearance."

"That warrants the idea," continued Rawlinson, "his shoe buckles were splendid, and as for a ring which I saw upon his finger, it was worthy of an Emperor."

"I never looked at his shoes, or scrutinized his hand," answered Mr. Law, "but a man might have been presented with a ring, and shoe buckles do not constitute riches."

It was quite evident that Mr. Law was not to be drawn into any argument; nor was he, from his short answers, likely to commit himself, by any discoveries of his client's intentions or wishes. Lady de Lancy felt uneasy, Laura was very anxious to retire, and Sir Ronald, who had given his own pride a small shock by his inconsiderate relation of his parent's birth, made ample amends in the haughty stride with which he left the room. Rawlinson followed him, and Mr. Law was requested to

walk into another room with the ladies, to explain his reasons for his visit.

"In the first place," he said, "you have a casket of jewels left here by Mr. Albert de Lancy some time since?"

"A casket was left here by a Jew, but I shall certainly refuse to give them up, as I am advised by my father, that I may be afterwards called to account for them, should this Jew ever appear again."

"Here is an order for them," said Law very coolly, "here a list and description of their contents, here an affidavit to whom they belonged, here directions to me as to their deliverance."

"I will call my father," said Lady de Lancy.

"Not the slightest occasion for it, I pledge my legal reputation that, by withholding them, you are in more peril than in their deliverance to me."

"Laura, my dear, get those baubles."

"Baubles forsooth!" muttered Law, "I

fancy your Ladyship would not be averse to the acceptance of them."

"I assure you, Mr. Law, I would not allow such baubles to remain in my house, and I am glad they are now going out of it."

"I have an order here to allow your Ladyship to select one of the jewels, or rather to present you with one herein described."

"I will not accept of it, Mr. Law, until I am made acquainted with the manner in which he became possessed of it."

Laura entered the room with the casket, or pedlar's box and gave it into Mr. Law's hands. He immediately said, "I am instructed to present these jewels to you, in the name of Mr. Albert de Lancy."

"You cannot accept them, Laura, you cannot be guilty of so base an act; what, receive a present from a man whose conduct is so mysterious, as to throw suspicion upon every act of his life? It cannot be, return them to Mr. Law."

"I shall not accept them, Madam; my instructions are merely to release you from the holding of them. They are to be given to Miss

Mackenzie, and she must accept them ; indeed, considering the circumstances which surround this case, her actual engagement to him, I say considering these things, I can see no impropriety in the acceptance of them."

Laura still entertained some hope that Mr. Law would throw such a light upon the subject, that she might still continue engaged to Albert. With all the maiden modesty which ever attended her, she shaped one or two questions relative to the abode of Albert, his mode of gaining his living, his visits to Mr. Law, and the extent of the latter's acquaintance with him. If any thing could have extinguished the fire of love which still smouldered in Laura's breast, it would have been Law's answers ; he literally knew less of him than Laura ; it was true he had entrusted Mr. Law with a case of great difficulty which he could not explain, but as to the name of his profession, his mode of life, or his actual acquaintance, no one knew less than the honest solicitor. " I am instructed," he said, " to remove you to London, are you contented to accompany me?"

" Most certainly not," interrupted Lady de

Lancy, I should consider myself highly reprehensible, if I allow Miss Mackenzie to leave my threshold, under the protection even of Mr. Law."

"She will be under the protection of my wife, who has already made preparations for her reception; I must have the answer from Miss Mackenzie herself, and I think, if I had a moment's conversation with her, I should either convince her how beneficial such a removal would be, or she herself would, with becoming pride, deny my wife the honour she anticipated and leave Lady de Lancy the pleasure of being her protector. Perhaps you will allow me a moment's conversation alone?"

"I am not fond, Mr. Law, of interfering with others in their own affairs, but upon this particular subject, I feel myself more the guardian of Miss Mackenzie, as since her last parent's death she has resided almost entirely with me. I have been her confidant, her friend, and I think my age and experience might in this case be of some service to her; I can see no reason

why I should be excluded, but of course if Laura *desires* it, I shall withdraw."

Laura would have given the world for a few minutes quiet conversation, and Lady de Lancy, well instructed by her father, was watchful to prevent it. After the word *desire*, Laura was unable to enforce it, and became confused between her wish and her gentility; Law mused about the room, as if he was the last man in the kingdom to be consulted. It appeared quite immaterial to him, if she staid or went; but he seemed to value his time, for every five minutes he looked at his watch, put his hands into his pockets and walked up and down the room like a bear in a cage. "Ladies," he said, "are not the best clients; I could wish you to trust as much to your legal adviser as to your female friend; for on the subject, the principal subject of my visit, I must have your own unbiassed consent, I mean in reference to your uncle, and I confess I should like this subject to be a strict secret so that should it transpire, I might know exactly on whom to fix the blame."

“ I thought, my dear Laura, my father was ever at your side and in your confidence concerning this affair of your uncle. I think any step taken without his concurrence, after the time he has given to your affairs, would, to say the least, be a little ungrateful ; if that is the subject to be discussed, I will call him.”

“ If I am not to be the sole adviser, as I am the responsible one, I must at once relinquish my situation as her solicitor, and am willing to make over the documents to any other man.”

“ If I were Miss Mackenzie,” said Lady de Lancy, “ I would never suffer myself to be at the caprice of any solicitor, much less to one who refuses to be guided by any opinion but his own.”

“ Dear Margaret, let me implore you to cease ; Mr. Law has ever been to me the kindest of friends, and his great care not to ruin my uncle in public estimation has proved the delicacy of his feelings towards myself. I cannot, I would not withdraw myself from his protection, not for the value of Raven Castle.

I asked your father's advice merely in the absence of Mr. Law ; he is now here himself, and I will not insult his integrity by consulting any other."

Law looked at Lady de Lancy as much as to say, after that you had better retire ; but Margaret had made up her mind ; her father who was within hearing, was ready to come to her rescue ; and her determination was, however rude she might appear, to keep Laura at Raven Castle until more was discovered concerning Albert.

" I am sorry, my dear girl, to see you so ungrateful ; it frequently happens in life, I believe, that those who have been sheltered in distress, forget any obligation in their prosperity ; but from you,—"

" Never, never, Margaret, shall you accuse me of that ; I own, before Mr. Law, all the obligations—"

" Pray do no such thing on my account, Miss Mackenzie ; the very mention of the obligation cancels it. If Mr. Rawlinson was here, I should unceremoniously state my opinion of

this extraordinary proceeding. I am not much addicted to flattery and hate long sentences ; but at the risk of civility, in regard to the one, and the censure I may incur in falling into the second, I will venture to state, that if there is any conversation at which a third person ought to be present, and that third person no relation, it is when you may discuss this subject again with Miss Mackenzie." Then turning abruptly round, he added quite low enough for Rawlinson to overhear, " There's a conspiracy against the girl, but I'll beat them all."

" Mr Law's carriage," said a footman.

" Good bye, Miss Laura ; you have been guilty of a greater folly to-day than I anticipated ; there—do not cry ; tears won't mend the matter. God bless you, good bye, Madam."

CHAPTER XIV.

“ You are quite right, my lads,” said Carlos, “ this fun won’t do any longer ; and who knows if he gets so fond of the shore but that he may, to save himself, hang us. Here have we been dodging about this dangerous place for two days, and likely enough to have been overhauled by half the Irish cruizers.”

“ I think we might modestly hint something about that oath :” said Snarling, “ for I am blessed if he does not leave the hooker to take charge of herself ; and a precious business we made of it at Falmouth.”

“ That was a blundered affair, and we were nearly discovered.”

“ Yes, that’s a truth we all know ; but if you had done what we proposed, instead of running

after that rosy faced girl, we should have got twice as much, with half the trouble."

"Lord bless them all," said Carlos with a sigh, "ever since I was as tall as a crow bar I have dangled after them, and not one of them ever yet did I marry. That splice is the worst thing a man can do who has got a face like this. What's the use of a man being tied to one woman, when he can make love to a hundred?"

"But you are sure to make a fool of yourself, master Carlos, just at the time you are most wanted to be cautious and discreet."

"But I always find out the jewels from the women. I get into the houses and lead you on through my discoveries."

"And generally get us into a net, from which nothing but the knife can release us. Here goes, my lads, for a good glass of grog and a jolly song. As long as liquor and women are to be found, who cares if it blows high or low, or if we skim before a hurricane or beat to windward in a light breeze. The Captain ought to be here to-day."

“ Aye, he is a fine fellow every inch of him, although he does go ashore occasionally; he never has been guilty of a cruelty, and he never yet has taken his full share of the prize money. I never saw a poor devil come along side the schooner that he did not somehow assist. And though he is as mild as milk with the women, he is as fierce as a lion with men. Come, lads, let’s have a glass, for Saturday night ought always to be a good wind up for the week.”

There were no voices raised against this proposition. Saturday night was ever a night of rejoicing, though never of drunkenness. There was no punishment too severe for that crime, and as the Spitfire was one of those peculiar cruisers—a foe to every other, and always in danger, it became requisite to enforce obedience to the law of sobriety by the severest punishment against all violaters of it. The jovial glass was therefore handed round with discretion; and Carlos the mate, at these meetings laid aside all the dignity of his rank, and was the foremost to promote hilarity. “ Come,

my lads," he said, "come aft here, every mother's son of you and I'll set you the example of taking a glass and singing a song; we must make it *saturday night*, although the sun's not down yet; for when this captain of our's gets on board, we shall as usual have to crowd all sail to make up for lost time. Here's our first toast. Hold in your pannekin, Snarling, and take care you don't spill enough to drown a musquito—that's all right—success to the Spitfire!—hurrah!—she is the vessel—no one ever overhauled her yet, and the only frigate ever built who could fore-reach upon us in a breeze, is the Flying Hebe. Now I'll give you a song, and mind you join in the chorus. Bob, turn your face to windward every five minutes and see we don't get run onboard of by any flying Dutchman; and Snarling, just every now and then keep a look out ahead, for the captain might be under the bows, before we have finished our allowance—here—

"For woman, for woman, my lads, fill the glass!

To the woman full grown, or the buxom young lass;

To the girl of fifteen, ever rosy and fair ;
To all of the sex who have not a grey hair !
Let's drink a full bumper and give them a cheer,
For who can know sorrow, when women are near !

“ Chorus, my jolly dogs, chorus as loud as
the boatswain's call in a squally night.

“Let's drink a full bumper, and give them a cheer ;
For who can know sorrow, when women are near !

“ When in youth and in health, o'er the world we may fly,
Our compass to guide is a woman's bright eye ;
If sickness attacks us, if age is our curse,
In age or in sickness, a woman's our nurse !
Then drink a full bumper and give them a cheer
For who can know sorrow, when women are near !

“ In the manhood of life, wheresoe'er we may rove
We must have a woman to cherish and love ;
Our joys, and our cares she partakes to the end,
And sinks in the grave, our companion, our friend !
Then drink off the bumper, a cheer boys—a cheer
We cannot feel sorrow, when women are near.

“ Just like you, Carlos,” said Snarling, “ al-
ways thinking, and singing, and sighing for a
woman. Lord bless you, if you only had a

wife and six small children, you would wish that creation had never ceased, and that all the world had been made men. I've known many a man cut his throat, all because he had one of your women glued to his side."

"Woman for ever—woman—woman," continued Carlos between each sip of his grog.

"I wonder," said Snarling not a little enraged, "how you would like that Puerto Cabello boy, you found with petticoats on, at St. Jago de Cuba, to appear again. You had enough of her, I should think."

"Not I," replied the libertine, "if ten o'clock had not have struck, I would have given her a kiss, and she would have been the first to have assisted us;—she was merely jealous of my attention to her mistress; they do get a little wayward when they get jealous, but a timely kiss and a most solemn oath, accompanied by the sign of the cross, and an upturned eye, soon sets their minds at ease. I tell you, Snarling, I've often sung a woman out of a rage which would have stilled a hurricane, it was so loud and long, by just giving her an air

or two on the guitar, and screwing up my eyes like a duck in thunder."

"Curse your guitar and your woman—give us a song about Portsmouth Poll, or the sailor ashore ; but none of your shoveing all hands of that whimpering sex down our throats with our grog. Hulloo, why here's a boat close along side of us."

This stopped Carlos's song. The boat was standing towards the schooner, and it did not require a telescope to discover the Captain sitting in the stern sheets. All the displeasure of the crew vanished when they saw him, although his face was rather clouded, and he appeared fatigued, and care worn.

"All sail, Carlos, we must get away to the southward. The Hebe is not far off; and although the Spitfire might sail against the devil himself, yet that frigate has such a character, that I would fain avoid her."

The schooner was soon under all sail standing to the southward. The dress of the Captain had changed—he was no longer the spruce dapper looking gentleman ; he looked as hand-

some again in his low broad brimmed hat, and his faultless shape was more visible from his round jacket.

"Carlos," he began, "I am very displeased with that business at Falmouth. That port—the one the most requisite for my stay in England, is now shut against us. I thought you were above all such petty larceny as that; we are at war with all vessels on the high seas, but breaking into houses is beneath us; besides so incautious were you, that your description is fully given—look here;" he produced an offer of reward for the discovery of the person described, and it was evident, from the exact description of the mate, that he was indebted to the fair Betsy for this accurate account of himself. Snarling was steering, and by way of a hint, he sung, "for women, for women, my lads fill the glass."

Carlos was vastly inclined to be one grade higher in the service he had chosen, and any little censure did not make him the less inclined to forward his views. He gently returned the rebuke upon his Captain, and saying, "Had

you been *there*, it would not have happened," and he very unceremoniously walked below.

The Captain was well aware that ambition was the great excitement of Carlos's life, and the short conversation which he had held with him at Campeche, might have made the mate aware of the Captain's wishes to resign his command, without any accidental death, either by a hasty blow of a dagger, or the surer and more painful application of poison ; but Carlos was lost in the terrific oath ; he could not conceive that any man could evade that, and the law of the Spitfire was as immutable as the law of nature. Carlos had three good points which stood conspicuous from the general darkness of his character—his universal love of the sex, his unflinching bravery, and his dread of violating his oath, this last was the only shield to protect the Captain. The crew were fond of their Captain, and would have revenged any insult offered to his person, and in such a case, would not have scrupled to have made the offender dangle from the long yard of the rakish schooner ; but ambition never stops

even at the most formidable barriers ; she vaults the difficulty, or falls in the attempt.

It was a beautiful calm morning:—the numerous vessels floating in the harbour, off Cadiz were all dressed in colors, which hung idly down the halyards, to which they were bent ; not a breeze ruffled the face of the waters, the clear sky was reflected in the sea, and an unusual stillness, such as is experienced in a huge capital, on the sabbath, prevailed. It was a day devoted to pleasure, and the morning sun came forth in its usual grandeur and brilliancy.

Amongst the many vessels which floated in this beautiful harbour was a schooner, the perfection of a model. She was long, low, and deep ; she was painted entirely black, and from a small staff fixed abaft, there fell almost to the water's edge, an American ensign. She had come into the harbour the night previous ; had passed an English fleet in the offing, and having ran by the vessels of France and Spain at the entrance, had taken up a position far above them, and in the midst of the numerous

merchantmen which were at anchor in the port. She had a cargo consigned to a market, that is, she was not dispatched to any peculiar house; the captain and the supercargo, who was a Spaniard, were intrusted with the sale, the produce of which was to be paid in hard dollars and doubloons; her papers had been examined, her Captain questioned, but the papers were found correct, and the information of the young man, who commanded the schooner, was clear and conclusive; he gave a succinct account of each day's events, the ships he had spoken with, or seen, and exhibited the hold of his vessel well stored with bales and articles mentioned in the manifest. There was no suspicion of her, more than the rakish look might occasion, and she was kept near the other merchantmen, to unlade her cargo at discretion.

The dawn was ushered in, by a salute from one of the batteries: the day was to be devoted to pleasure, and quite in vain the active supercargo ran from house to house, to speak with merchants, not one would devote an

hour to the purchase of any goods whatsoever ; not even the manifest would be glanced over ; there was to be a bull fight, and every man, woman, and child, had taken leave of the means of subsistence, for the gratification, of witnessing a cruel, and useless exhibition. Of all games, or all amusements, since the time of the gladiators, there is none more calculated to harden the heart, or damp benevolence, than a bull fight ; but a bull fight was a national entertainment, and consequently every soul far or near, flocked to the arena.

The ground selected for the barbarous entertainment was about one league from Cadiz, on the Seville road. Great preparations had been made to render the scene imposing, and every French officer, of whom there were many, both in the naval and military line, were as a compliment, provided with places. It was a scene of excitement, rarely rivalled. The women in their best attire, their dark eyes flashing unusual vivacity, crowded to gain the nearest seats to the scene of action, and in that crowd, there were faces sparkling with youth, beaming in

beauty, and radiant with delight. But there were others, who seemed more intent upon surveying the crowd, than noticing the performances. The Picadores, or the Matadores had no charms for them, their eyes only surveyed the charms of the women; and the slaughter of the bull, as the deafening cheers arose which welcomed the gaudy butcher, who accomplished the feat, was unnoticed by them.

Even at that moment, when all seemed more than usually excited, two persons might have been observed in close conversation; they walked round and round the large arena, never once pushing themselves towards an opening, or heeding the many shouts which rose as the business proceeded. One man had been killed; the enraged animal turned shortly round upon him, who had affixed a fire work in its back; he stood coolly to avoid the encounter, when the infuriated animal should rush at him; his foot slipped at the critical moment, and he was tossed in the air; he fell with a lifeless sound, and before the horsemen, who are ever ready to save a companion, could distract the bull from its

object, the bleeding corpse was trampled upon by the furious beast. The body was removed ; it passed so close to the two persons, that they were obliged to stop, to allow it to pass, but they took not the slightest notice, or offered the most indifferent remark.

" You must be wrong," said one, " you say, when we left St. Jago de Cuba, she had not the slightest intention of coming to Spain."

" She even did not know where the country was," replied Carlos, " but she is here, and if that eternal devil, who acted the boy at Puerto Cabello, should be with her, we shall have enough to do. I have marked the place where she sat, and she is there still, surrounded by her own sex ; to them she will not talk of disappointed love, or the rivalry of her own maid ; but if her father lost by our attack on the mules that evening, she might mention that, to make others believe, she once had money ; it's odd, but it is all over the world the same ; people are ever fond, even in the greatest adversity, of persuading their hearers, that they *once* were in better circumstances ; it

is a kind of attestation, that the pauper might be a gentleman."

"Nonsense, Carlos, talk of that which nearest concerned our safety; the garrotte is a very uncomfortable neckcloth, although one might expire in a decent chair, which is better than hanging."

"If it's her, I must pay one of those rascals to put the everlasting seal of silence on her; if the stiletto or the water be the most convenient, why the pain is not great."

"I would not have you tincture your hand, with blood, for the sake of my neck."

"Perhaps not, but my own is another affair, for which I have more regard; a woman's tongue must never stop my breath; come hither then, and I will point her out; the affair inside here seems to occupy all attention; and we may make certain of her, without discovery. She knows you, as well as myself, so that the matter concerns both of us."

"Have we not money enough now, Carlos, to leave off this trade, to which we are both condemned?"

"The oath, the oath, I would not violate it, for all or twice of this world's treasure; the shaven headed priest might, in proportion to the doubloons I paid for absolution, talk of his forgiveness, but the skin would rot from my bones, and I should walk a living skeleton on the earth, in spite of his protestation of my forgiveness. It is their trade, Captain, to deceive those who pay for the deceit, as a juggler blinds those who have paid for seeing his sleight of hand. My hand is stained with blood, for that the priest of the Havanah absolved me; another drop would not cost more, and I can find plenty of Padres in Cadiz. Look there, do you doubt me now; her father, Santa Maria de Compostella! by her side; behind her, sits Francisca, as modest, as if she could not bear the glance of a man's eye; it's all over the world the same, Captain, the woman who is the worst, always affects to be the best. Those who are famous for intrigues can never bear the look or the impertinence of those horrid men. Innocence looks boldly and fearlessly; your

little sinners always aim at the sanctity of saints."

"It is her," said the Captain, who never had paid the slightest regard to the wise saws of Carlos, who certainly, on the subject in which he had descanted, was undoubtedly a man of much learning and experience. "It is her, and by her side sits the money-making merchant; it is well your eyes for once were diverted from the daughter to the father. This is unfortunate, we cannot creep out to sea unobserved, and in offering the cargo, we may run right into the lion's mouth; our inactivity would excite suspicion, and the evidence against us is sufficiently strong to place us in the chair of execution before to-morrow's sun is set."

"I never saw you troubled about a trifle before, Captain; I have friends here—there is little fear of observation in this crowd."

"Carlos, a thought; could you not shave off your mustachios and whiskers, and be thus disguised."

"Shave off my mustachios!" said Carlos,

St. Francisco de Barcelona, not to save a thousand heads. Of what use is a man who makes love, without mustachios? They are passports into society in your country. I tell you a pair of black mustachios are two days' sure advance in the field of love. I have no objection to a scar on my cheek, a split in my nose, the loss even of an ear—but my mustachios, St. Jago de Compostella, are as sacred as the wood of the cross to a saint of seventy five!

"Then we must return on board directly, catch the first breeze which will blow us clear of the harbour, and risking every thing, run through the fleet, and evade their guard boats—a little discretion might save us. But I know well you wish to be revenged on her you have ruined, and would hazard detection rather than be baulked."

"If these people travel about like pedlars, we are never safe; but I think I can manage them without losing my revenge, and without hazarding a discovery; let me try my way, I must forget this time my little Juanita, and turn my attention to that lady there. Hah, my

friend," continued Carlos, as he touched a ferocious little man on the shoulder; "come this way, aqua vita is good to clear the throat from this burning sand." The stranger kissed both sides of Carlos's cheeks and withdrew, whilst the Captain, now unable to thwart Carlos in his plan, placed himself in a position to avoid the St Jago de Cuba merchant, and to see some little of the amusement. He could not desert his officers—the oath bound them together, and there was no severing the tie—but the scythe of death.

It was late before the crowd began to disperse. The Captain had never lost sight of the merchant—it being his intention to watch him to his house, then to make inquiries concerning him. He saw him and his daughter get into a miserable vehicle; the maid Francisca was huddled into a corner, and the stumbling animal was whipped, with unabated vigour, in order to start it into a trot.

The Captain had ridden to the bull fight, and was soon upon his noble animal; he kept close to the vehicle—his broad brimmed sombrero

being pulled well down over his eyes, whilst he contrived to give an air of awkwardness to his figure, by the slovenly manner in which he rode. The crowd was immense, and carriage after carriage, and horseman after horseman passed the dull sluggard who would not mend his pace for the beating ; at last, it stopped at a small miserable looking house ;—the master and the daughter descended, and Francisca drove the vehicle into a shed behind the house ; another person lent assistance to unharness the horse, and in a few minutes not a soul was to be seen. The house stood a little from the road side ; it was at least half a mile from the town, and apparently so insignificant, that no one possessing wealth would have inhabited it ; but the old custom of the merchant presented itself to the Captain, for those who by toil and exertion scrape together an existence are those who best preserve their fortunes ; by prudent living they save more than they make.

It was dark ; there was no light visible from any window. The Captain had retired from the spot and had ridden to the hotel at which

he resided. The principal people, who had crowded to the bull fight had returned, and only a few stragglers, all hastening their pace to arrive at the gates before they were closed, alone remained behind.

"This time will do," said Carlos, as he whispered two men who were enveloped in large cloaks; "they have money, and they are unknown—begin at once."

"Begin," answered the stoutest, "why I thought you were to lead the way—we know there are four persons in the house, and one is sufficient, this still night, to make noise enough to alarm a fortification;—we had better creep round, and wait until one comes into the yard to see all is safe—we can secure her mouth, hands and all, and then walk boldly in and do the deed;—it is a desperate affair, and hardly worth our undertaking."

"They are misers, I tell you; the father has doubloons enough to make you a grandee of Spain; the daughter has a fortune which would buy the largest house in Cadiz; José, never mind an unwilling scream, your horse

will bear her away—leave the maid to me. Come, we only lose time, let us tie our horses to the shed, and, under favour of this darkness, get safe into the yard. The crowd are all gone, and we have done such things before without half this long preparation.”

CHAPTER XV.

It was not long before the neighing of a horse attracted the attention of one of the servants, who looking out of the back door, thought she perceived her master's horse loose in the yard ; in this she was not mistaken, she advanced to the quiet animal, and taking it by the ear, led it to the shed, to which it had been fastened. Whilst both her hands were thus employed, she was seized ; before she could utter one word, a handkerchief was tied round her mouth, her hands were fastened, and she was a prisoner. Carlos went close to her, and looked her in the face. There was light enough to discern the countenance ; it was not Francisca ; and thus he whispered to his comrades, who stood likewise beside her, but

with their faces covered. This act of prudence Carlos had omitted ; indeed he cared not one straw for any discovery, having quite made up his mind to still every voice which could be raised against him.

They now secured this girl effectually : her hands were fastened behind her, the end of the lashing being placed high up on the rack, keeping her in this painful position, of leaning forward almost to falling ; her legs were likewise secured, and after a coarse joke, which ruffians have ever ready, they left her, and proceeded into the house.

It was but one rush, and the whole three were grasped firmly. Francisca had caught sight of Carlos, and she screamed loud and long ; in vain he tried to secure her ; the nimble girl once eluded his grasp and ran round the room, shrieking for assistance. The daughter was silenced but with difficulty, but the merchant had yielded without much of a struggle, and was now pinioned and gagged.

" Stop her infernal voice," said Carlos ; a stiletto effected the purpose, and her dying

eye was fixed on him who had prompted the murder; all the forgiveness which a dying saint could have emitted from her glassy eyes fell upon her seducer, her destroyer; it struck even upon the hardened heart of Carlos. He dropped upon his knees, and making the sign of the cross, the only substitute for a prayer his convenient religion had taught him, he took her hand, and pressed it; even that brought back some existence, to the prostrate girl; she looked at him with as much life as she could command, and uttered loud enough to be heard, "Spare her, spare her, and may the blessed virgin forgive you," the hand fell from the grasp even of a ruffian, and it remained still—with all the horrid stillness of death by the side of the corpse. Carlos did nothing but cross himself, and call upon the blessed virgin. It was his only effort of a prayer, and stood for words he would have uttered, had the mind been stored with that wholesome balm which soothes in all hours of affliction and distress.

"What are you crossing yourself for, you woman-hearted brute?" said the man, who

kept the stiletto, still reeking with the blood of the girl; "why I had better keep this drop warm, by adding a little of yours to it. Up, we are not here to say prayer; it is time enough for that, when the chair is placed, and the government neckerchief fastened."

Carlos sprung upon his legs, but his eyes were still upon her who had once sworn eternal love to him, and by whom he had nearly been betrayed; but he was recalled to his presence of mind by her last words, and he turned round to protect her whom he had so nearly deceived. The ruffian who held her fast in security, had pointed the stiletto to her breast, which he had bared to receive it, and a drop of blood, from the murdered girl, had left a spot as a mark, whereon he should strike; the ruffian held her by the throat; his large hand, with fingers long used to blood, clutched her firm in his grasp, whilst the timid girl, vainly endeavoured to shriek for mercy or assistance. The father made one desperate effort to succour his child, but he was infirm from age, and wearied from the long day's

exertion ; but still he strove, and resolutely strove to save her, his only hope, his only girl ; in vain were all his useless efforts, the hand which held him on his chair, was young and strong, and he sank back overpowered, his burning eye-balls fixed upon the struggling girl.

“ Let go your hold, Juan,” said Carlos ; “ have we not the girl tied, can she escape ? Let go I say, or by St. Jago, you will make an enemy of me ;—it is money, not blood we want.”

“ Why, here’s a change made by a dying girl’s murmur,” replied Juan, as he released his hold, and said, “ speak but one word, call but once, and, by the blessed virgin, this stiletto makes you that,” and he pointed to the corpse.

The girl made one effort and fell on her father’s bosom.

“ Carlos,” said the third, “ you know we have honour amongst us, as men above us in life boast of their consistency. You bribed

us here to still the tongues of these three, and money was to be the reward."

"Oh spare us, spare us," said the girl, "we are but poor, miserably poor, rendered so by him," and she looked at Carlos; "the money which would have enriched us, was stolen by him; after he had shared our hospitality, then he basely robbed us. Father, father, speak, where is all we have, all, all in the world? Hurt not his grey hairs, good Señors, he is old, weak, infirm, and death will soon save your conscience from the remembrance of such an act. Say that you will not harm that poor man, who is unable even to raise an arm in defence of his daughter, and I will give you to the utmost farthing." She stood like a shield before her old father; it was through her the stiletto must have reached him; the daughter defended with her bared bosom, the life of her father, whilst the poor old man remained speechless, and motionless.

"Will that do, Juan," said the third man, "shall we take all and leave her?"

No, no," said Carlos, "you must take her far away, or the bargain is off; you have horses fresh and able to go far this night, and by St. Jago she is not so ugly, but that many might buy her of you, even in your forest retreats."

"We don't want women there, although the girl's handsome enough, and we might dispose of her charms to some account; but we don't like witnesses who come against us, or women who require to be watched, lest they escape; one is dead, the other may live, if you are contented and pay us the money; as for the old man, we leave him to you."

"Will you take her hence and keep her away from this place for a fortnight, if I pay you the price I set upon her death?"

"Give us ten doubloons more," said Juan, "and it's a bargain."

"Mind," said Carlos, "you keep her so close that no letters are to be written, nor a word from her babbling tongue heard by a stranger."

"Never fear that; she'll call loud enough where we put her, before any one will over-

hear the secret ; and the old man, and the girl outside ?” .

“ Leave them to me,” said Carlos, “ that girl only asked for her to live.”

During this short conversation, the girl’s ears seemed standing from her head like a dog’s, whilst her eyes were fixed upon the different speakers as they bargained for her life in a larger sum than they had bargained for her death ; this gave her some hope, but the last speech of Carlos unloosened her tongue which anxiety and discretion had silenced.

“ Take him with me,” she said, “ oh do not leave him in that villain’s hands, spare but his life ; he shall not trouble you, I will be his nurse, and I swear by all above us, by Him who witnesses this scene and hears my word, that neither of us will ever utter one word of what has happened. Surely it is better to save so horrid a crime and still to gain more. What !—can men and Spaniards, dig their poignards in such a defenceless body as this ?”

“ We cannot take both, Carlos ; but we will

take the girl; hush, I hear footsteps at the outer gate, quick quick."

They seized the girl, she clung to her father, and shrieked for aid, and in the stillness of night the voice of despair is carried far and far away. In vain she clung with life's greatest devotion to her poor old father, in vain he too struggled to retain her, her voice was choked; for the third ruffian was not insensible to the danger of her cries; she was dragged along the floor, and, assisted by Carlos, was tied in front of Juan and to his person on the horse; as he secured her he whispered, "This is surer than our walk at St. Jago de Cuba, and Francisca will scarcely alarm you now." Away went the horse bearing its silent load upon its back; a black veil concealed the face, the mouth was rendered quiet from a handkerchief tied over it, and the beauty of St. Jago was at a full gallop on her road to a cave, the resort of this desperate banditti; the third stranger followed well armed and ready to protect the charge, and Carlos, after watching the last glimpse of

the fugitives, he once thought to injure and now had rendered fatherless, returned to dispose of the body of Francisca.

The maid was now released, but led, her hands still bound, to the house, and there a sight presented itself which paralysed the girl; the father had managed to creep to the window and had vociferated loud enough to draw the attention of some passers by; some rushed round to the back door, arriving not a second after Carlos, who, ignorant of their approach, had entered. He rushed to the old man and threw him back upon the corpse of Francisca, but in the moment saw the faces of three or four men, who watched the window as the only possible egress of the murderer; he instantly relinquished the maid and hastened to escape by the way he had entered; his horse was near, and once upon it he doubted not his security. In this moment, when coolness would best have befriended him, he drew his cloak round him and rushed to the door; it opened to his touch, and before he could recover from his astonishment, or draw a weapon for his defence, he was seized, and bound,

and thrown on the floor with his face downwards.

The first object was to gain information from the father who lay senseless on the corpse of Francisca. He was raised up and placed in the chair he had before occupied, but his eye was filmed and heavy, his lower jaw had fallen, his heart had ceased its pulsation, and the apprehension of Carlos came too late, to give him a moment's satisfaction before he had died. There was no wound to have occasioned it, not a scar was to be found, nor had violence occasioned it; the chord had broken at the last effort; he had seen the men approach, and in the hope of assistance—the joy became greater than his exhausted frame could bear, and he died in excess of that he had all his life sought for in vain.

Francisca was dead, the maid alone could give information, and she had not been present; her story however was clear as to three men having at first bound her; that two alone had escaped, and that the third had released her, and never left her until her rescue.

Carlos, on being examined, gave a wonder-

fully cool account of himself:—he had, he said, heard the cries of the old man and rushed to his assistance; that he followed two men who had just placed a female on the saddle and rode off with her; that turning to enter the house in order to be of any service he might be called upon to execute, he had seen the maid fastened to the manger; that he instantly released her, and, led by her, he had entered the house; seeing the old man fall down as if dead and observing the corpse of Francisca, he was on the point of going out to give the alarm, when those ruffians unceremoniously entered and secured him as the murderer. “Not an unusual instance,” he said, “how the best purposes might meet with the worst rewards.”

“Did you see the people who bound you?” said one of the officers who fortunately was returning with his men from the bull fight, when the alarm had been given.

“Two had masks, but the third I saw distinctly.”

“Is that the man? look at him coolly and deliberately, and do not answer unguarded;”


the light was held close to his face, and the girl instantly swore by the Purissima Concepcion that he was the man.

In a few minutes, Carlos, the gay and lively ; on whom conscience had slept for years, who had never thought of his crimes and his levities, was ironed as a prisoner, found his strong arm rendered powerless by the stronger shackle which held him, and, midst the taunts, the hisses, the execrations of those around him, was led to prison there to await his trial.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE Captain had long waited with impatience for the arrival of his mate; he had made his own mind easy in the belief, that Carlos would manage to remove the object of his fears without resorting to blood; indeed, so constantly had the Captain denounced that crime as one which he would never overlook, that his crew had banished the idea of death, saving in an affray in which their opponents were armed, and capable of great resistance.

It was dark, when, uneasy from the long delay, the manteau was thrown over his shoulders, and in order to dispel his thoughts, he walked in the streets. How strange it is, that in almost all concerns in life we have some forebodings of the event; there was a gloom came over the Captain, which he could



not dispel. It was true, the schooner was placed in a situation from which she could hardly hope to escape; but the sharp eyes of the officers had been blinded, the papers had been examined, and a day had elapsed without any suspicion being engendered. The consequences which might arise from the discovery of Carlos by Francisca, were readily imagined; and to obviate this, the Captain had resolved to sail the next day, giving for his reason, that he could obtain a better sale for his cargo at Malaga. To this, there would have been no objection; she was consigned to a market in Spain, and if at Cadiz or at Malaga, it was indifferent. The Spitfire could defy a cruiser, but in the harbour, her powers were overmatched.

For some time, the Captain walked in pensive meditation of the past and making resolves for the future; he had formed a plan, in his own mind, by which his conscience would be released of the oath which bound him a prisoner in his unfortunate situation, and compelled him to act in direct defiance to his

principles and his wishes. The figure of Laura Mackenzie then gladdened his imagination ; but the circumstance of his not finding a letter at the post office, which he had desired her to write, was unaccountable. Love sometimes mixes itself up even in thoughts of far different character ; it returns like a welcome light after the long traverse of the ocean has been effected. Suddenly, a noise—a yell, more than a common expression of contempt, reached his ears ; he ran across a narrow street that divided him from the main street, and he soon saw the cause of the noise, which in garrisoned towns always, excites attention.

There were four or five men, carrying torches, and guards with their fire-arms, before, on each side, and behind them. It was, evidently, something of importance, far beyond the general escort of either a deserter or a drunkard, and the Captain placed himself on a slight elevation to catch a glimpse of the prisoner. It was Carlos, apparently indifferent to the yells and hisses which greeted his ears at every step ; he walked firmly to the place of

his confinement, and to the prison door was he escorted, even by his Captain.

In that mob, which swelled as the prisoner advanced, were many conversant with the affair which led to the apprehension of the supposed murderer. The story had rather got exaggerated in proportion as it passed those rough lips inclined to give words a too strong imagination, for no two people relate any anecdote alike. Here the Captain heard of a triple murder, and a maid, the only servant of the house, being carried away by two men; the third was taken in the act of stabbing an old man, who afterwards died of his wounds, and the prisoner was the murderer.

Although Albert knew well that all stories were exaggerated, yet he was fully aware of the fears which would prompt Carlos to still any voice; he knew how desperate he became if disappointed in his plans, and he felt certain that blood had been shed.

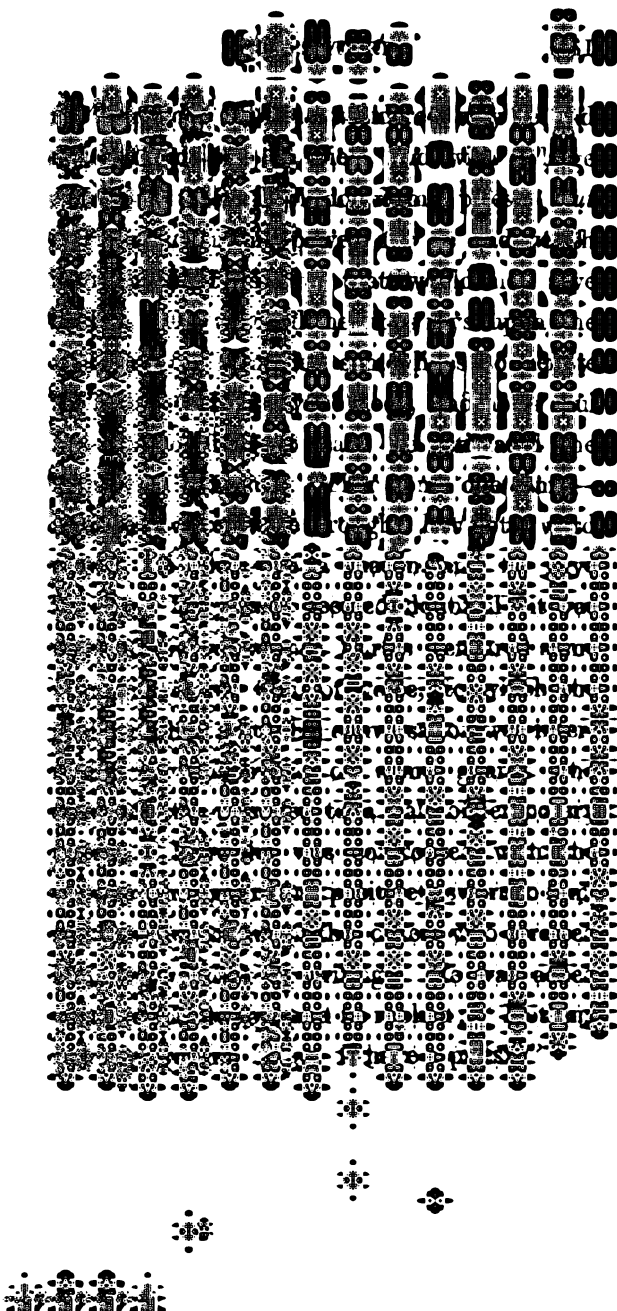
To rescue the prisoner was impossible,—to aid his escape was, perhaps, practicable. He weighed well the consequences of delay; it

seemed evident, from all he had heard, that one who knew the schooner, or at least its mate, was dead, and that the only witness now within reach, was one who was ignorant of Carlos before that evening. He resolved, at all hazards, to remain; nay, it was a part of his oath, that a companion should never be left until he was dead; he knew his men were ever alert, that in an instant the cable would be slipped, and that a chance might be given to escape, although that chance was most desperate. He waited until the crowd of people had gradually returned to their homes, and when the street was nearly quiet, he retraced his own steps, and sought upon his pillow how he was to act, and what plan was to be pursued.

Carlos was soon asleep; he had heard the gates closed upon him, the heavy bolts and bars fastened; he held out his hands to be released of the handcuffs, and the legs to be ironed, with all the unconcern of a practised prisoner. He asked no questions—some bread and water were placed on a stone slab, and

without even any straw to soften the bed of stone, he laid down and soon fell asleep. He had all his life bargained for this result—he had anticipated it, and now that it had come, he met it like a man.

In the morning, the wish for his usual exercise made his thoughts keen; he surveyed his cell; it was a miserable stone enclosure, of about eight feet long, and the same in width; the window, which gave a feeble light, was so small, that to all appearance he could not have squeezed his body through the aperture, and so high that he could not contrive even to raise himself up to look through it; every part of the cell was firm and uninjured; in vain he sought for some weak point through which he hoped to escape; the prison was in good order, and the prisoner was secure. Then, indeed, as the long day passed, his thoughts reverted to former scenes, and in contemplating his end, he felt a savage pleasure at the mischief he had occasioned; he had more in his power, but the oath—the dreadful oath.—Then occurred to him the hint of his Captain



"That will not be denied to you," said the alcalde, "much need have you of him;" he continued, "and I implore you to use the small time which is yet allotted you, to live in penitence and prayer. Whence came you, prisoner?"

"From the bull fight," answered Carlos.

"That is an evasion," said the alcalde, "which ill becomes you;—I mean, where do you live?"

"Every where," replied Carlos doggedly.

"Where did you sleep the night before last?"

"On the beach."

"You are a sailor?"

Carlos made no reply.

"You are a sailor?"

"If you know it," said Carlos, "it is useless my answering the question."

"Young man," said the merciful judge, "I can feel for your situation, and I would warn you of your danger. Before a week is passed, you will cease to behold that glorious sun, and in the cold grave will await the sentence of a

giving unto the law, the law's right over the persons of your accomplices. I see you anxious to speak—begin."

There was an awful silence in the room, each imagined that a confession was about to be made, when Carlos began :

" I feel the justice of your remark, Señor, and am inclined to obey your injunctions."

" Your oath," murmured a deep voice.

Carlos's cheek blanched with fear, and he was silent.

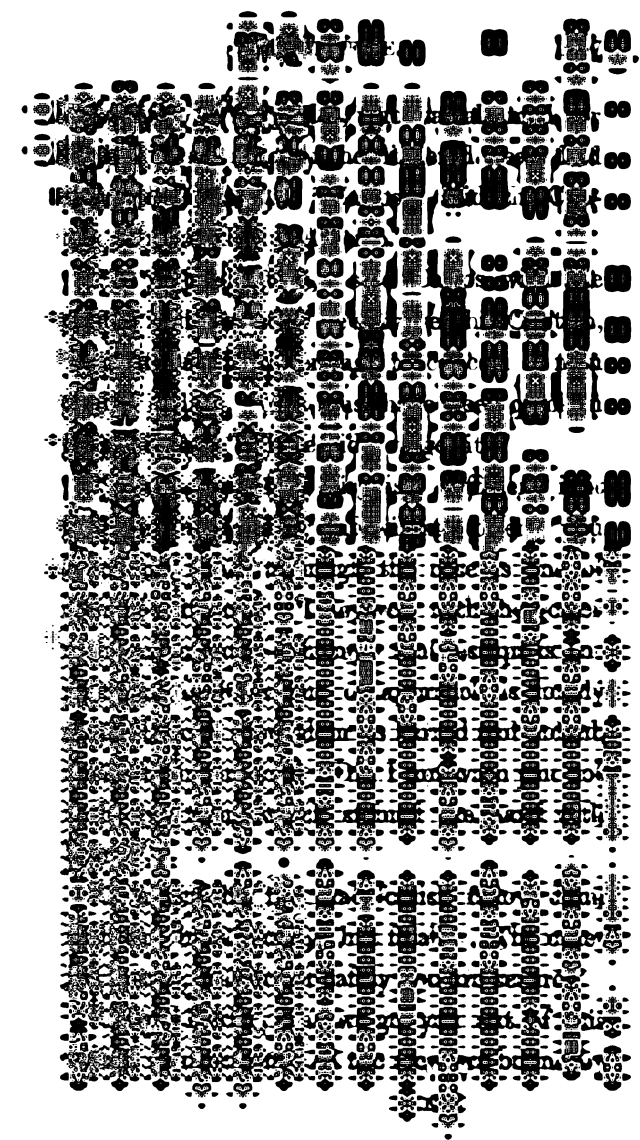
" Who spoke?" asked the alcalde,—“let him be instantly seized.”

No one could swear who spoke; all heard it, but none could point out the speaker. Carlos's quick eye surveyed the people present, he recognized his Captain, and in that winning voice, he felt he had yet companions bound by the same oath to release him.

" I am disposed," said Carlos, resuming his speech, "to do all that is right; but I would first ask your favour to allow me a holy father to whom I can convey all I feel *here*," and he laid his hand on his heart, "when he has ab-

一、本會定於本月廿三日（星期日）下午二時，在
 本會禮堂舉行週年大會，屆時請全體會員準時出席，
 以便討論重要事項。此致
 全體會員
 會長 李國華 謹啟
 二、本會定於本月廿五日（星期二）下午二時，在
 本會禮堂舉行週年大會，屆時請全體會員準時出席，
 以便討論重要事項。此致
 全體會員
 會長 李國華 謹啟
 三、本會定於本月廿七日（星期四）下午二時，在
 本會禮堂舉行週年大會，屆時請全體會員準時出席，
 以便討論重要事項。此致
 全體會員
 會長 李國華 謹啟
 四、本會定於本月廿九日（星期六）下午二時，在
 本會禮堂舉行週年大會，屆時請全體會員準時出席，
 以便討論重要事項。此致
 全體會員
 會長 李國華 謹啟
 五、本會定於本月三十一日（星期日）下午二時，在
 本會禮堂舉行週年大會，屆時請全體會員準時出席，
 以便討論重要事項。此致
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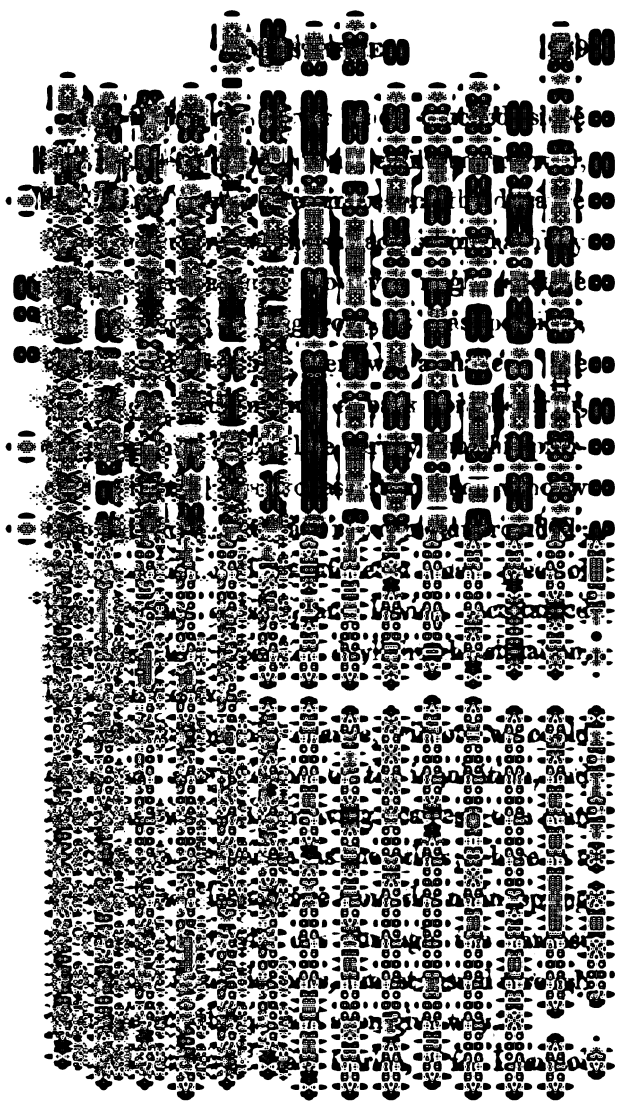
clock, and the shades of evening were fast darkening the already dull and dreary abode. In those deep and solitary cells no voice of gladness ever rises to chase away the awful silence which reigns in the abode of crime; never yet had a prisoner enlivened his long, long hours of seclusion by a cheerful note, until this day, when the clear voice of Carlos might have been heard; nay he was exerting himself as much as if some willing female ear was listening to his moonlight serenade, when the door of his cell opened and the tall figure of a friar entered the room. The gaoler ushered him in, saying "When you want me, call, or name the time now when I shall return?" "In an hour," said the friar, "come; until then, as you value your soul's salvation, keep out of hearing, for this man's secret may be for none but holy ears. Go, and warn me when my hour is expired. The levity of your song," said he to Carlos, as the gaoler lingered to listen, "ill becomes one whose life is forfeited—whose hours are numbered." By this time the door had been fastened, and even the



their oath, which oath you seemed half inclined to break ; remember that the smallest whisper on your part exonerates us—your safety is alone in us, for if you confessed to-morrow, you would be executed the next day, or bound a slave to an oar, compelled to weary out a life of misery and hardship, a slave to hear the words of reproach, unable to take vengeance, and meekly bow your back to receive the stripes your tyrant master might please to inflict. Or worse than all, in your very soul's sadness be made to sing to rejoice them."

"The prospect is not very flattering ; but we waste time in words. Place yourself here, good Captain, I want to look out at the world, and without a friar's shoulders one never can be clear of a difficulty. See where I have left the marks of my nails as I desperately attempted to leap that height."

The Captain leant against the wall, and Carlos, as nimble as a monkey, got to the window ; he measured himself with the opening, and concluded, that although it would be a squeeze, he could manage to get through.



gain the window without assistance. To-morrow, Wednesday, is fixed for my trial. Saturday, the kind alcalde, hinted as the last day I should see the sun, and I have little time for my prayer—my repentance and my escape.”

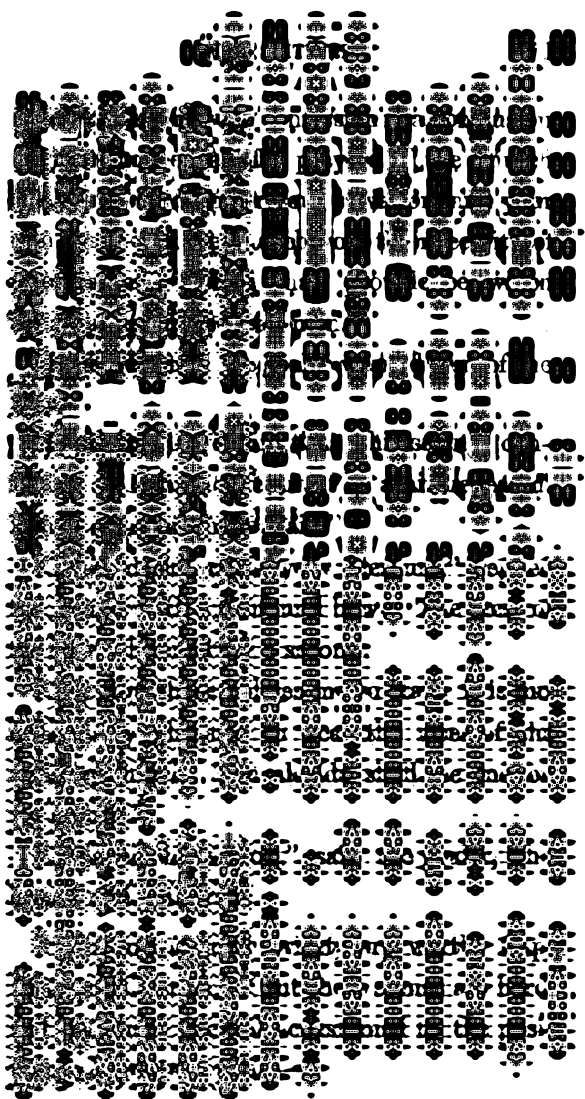
“That inconvenience we cannot remedy, for a line attached to bars would excite attention from the goaler.”

“He is a mason, and we have already exchanged signals.”

“Cannot you ask him for a chair; making some excuse for not sitting on that cold stone?”

“We can try,” said Carlos; “hark, I hear the door which leads to the passage; you must not leave me yet.”

“Kneel down and place your head in my hand; there. You have done well, my son, by this timely confession, and I believe that you are innocent of the crime.” The goaler entered with a light and placed it on the floor, then waited, not to interrupt the holy man, although the hour was expired. “The circumstance of your being there, is strong suspicion



“Do you manage the goaler; tell him of wealth untold in foreign parts, and try to bribe him; every man has done as much.”

“That’s far from consolation, for it is evident by his being here, that he has never been seduced from his duty.”

“Place that in his hand; those doubloons are wonderful logicians. I shall be present to-morrow at the trial, but we must not venture any thing there. The court will be crowded by soldiers, and you will be the first dispatched, if a rescue is attempted; after the trial I will come to you, and after dark again; Thursday and Friday if well used, may do much, and in the event of your endeavouring to escape that way, by the window, I will have hands in preparation. Here is your watch, it is set with mine; be careful to wind it up, for we shall be to the second and we must not have any mistake. Where is the other girl?”

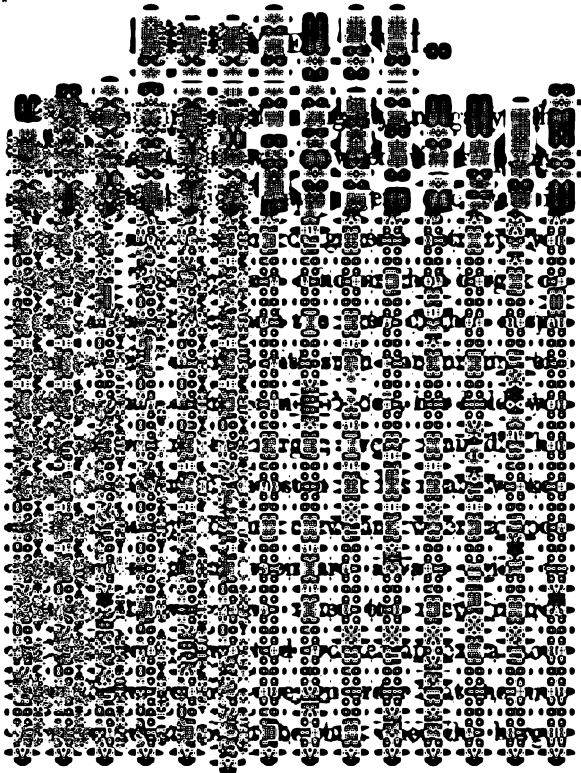
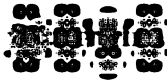
“In the mountains.”

“Do you think that if she told the story of St. Jago de Cuba, those fellows would not sell the secret to the government on condition of their pardon and our capture?”

[illegible]

"The half hour is past," said the goaler, as he bowed his head.

"'Tis well," answered the friar. "Young man, I recommend you to your prayers, the trifling sins you have confessed, of these I have absolved you. By *his* power, some aid will release you—some witness confront the girl, and your innocence will appear. Be kind to him, goaler; although the law requires those irons on a suspected man, he is not guilty, and you will best perform your duty by mingling kindness with security. Farewell, until to-morrow; be patient under your affliction; He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, will not desert the innocent. My blessing be upon you. Good night, and may refreshing slumbers render you strong for to-morrow." Carlos bowed his head, and the goaler, as he took the light to escort him, crossed himself.

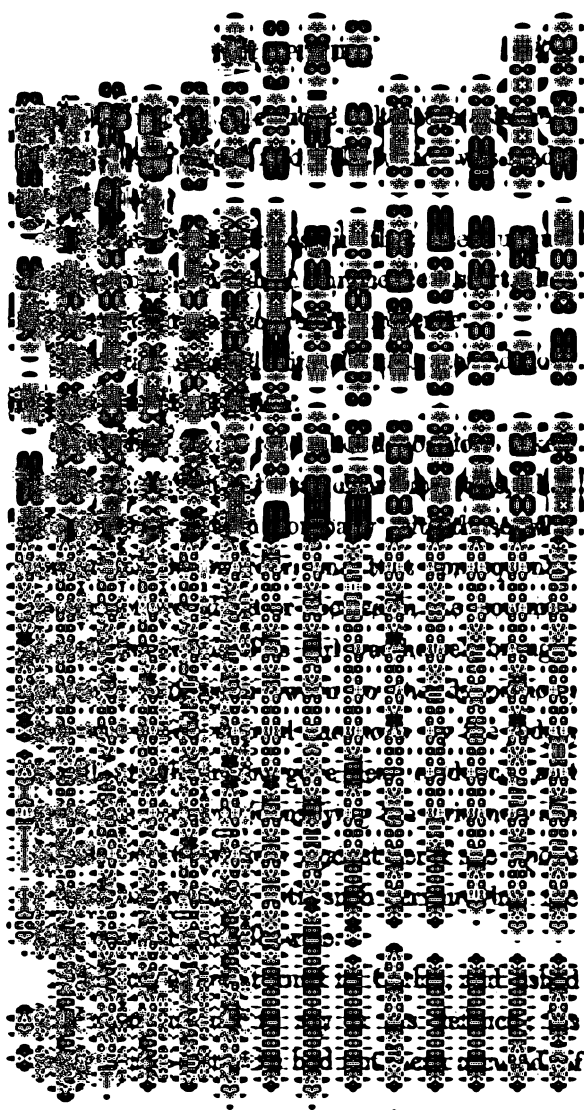


were landing their loads. The Captain snatched a hasty morsel, and soon habited as a friar was landed.

Public curiosity, although a commodity not much used by Spaniards, was on the occasion of the trial of Carlos much excited; various rumours had been circulated, that much might be expected to be elicited and the court was crammed to excess. The friar obtained as much respect as the judge; his face was partly concealed, and as he advanced he obtained a free passage to a seat on which he sat down, and bent forward as if in earnest prayer.

The prisoner was placed at the bar, the officers of justice were by his side; behind him stood four soldiers; he was inclosed in a place rendered secure by every precaution, and his legs were still confined with irons.

The preliminary circumstances having been finished, a clerk who sat at a table below the judge read from a paper the nature of the accusation against the prisoner; there was an universal silence; it was strange that so many men could maintain so awful a stillness; the



any crime, that it was sworn that he was near certain persons to him unknown, but that no one saw him commit a murder, no one accused him of that or any other offence. The girl was now recalled and she swore positively to Carlos having assisted in securing her to the rack of the manger, and that they were all three concerned together before the murder; that she saw them go into the house together, saw the two escape and the third the prisoner."

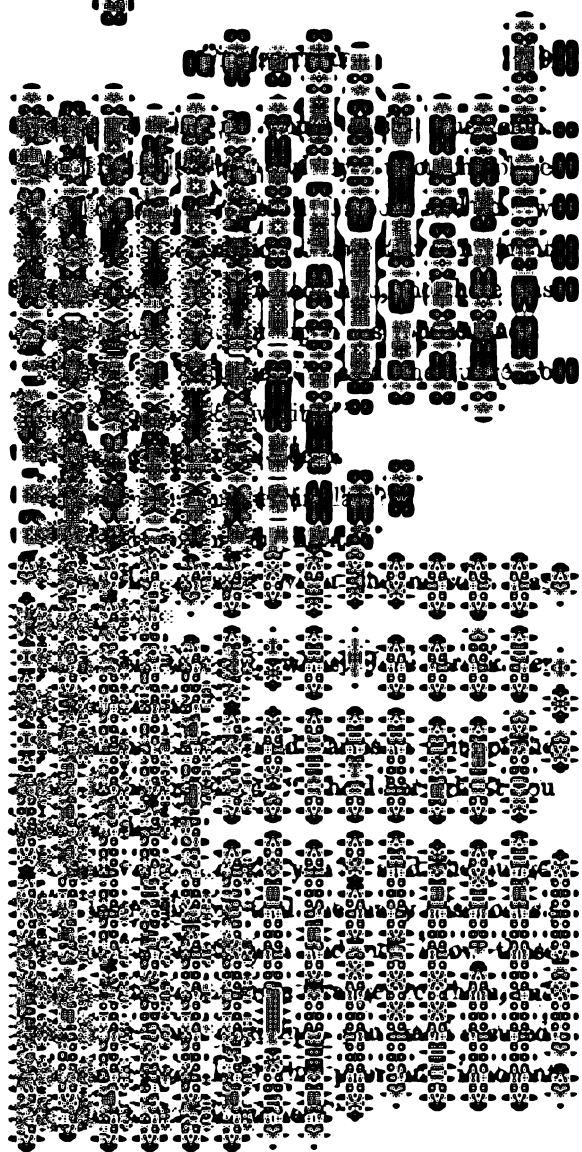
The judge looked at Carlos, and bade him reply to that. "It was," he averred, "a mistake of the prisoner, that she had sworn to the best of her belief; but that her belief was false."

"Have you any witnesses to call?" asked the judge.

"None," said he, "for I was alone, returning from the bull fight."

"Then I will call one," said the judge. "Where is this Juan Aliva?"

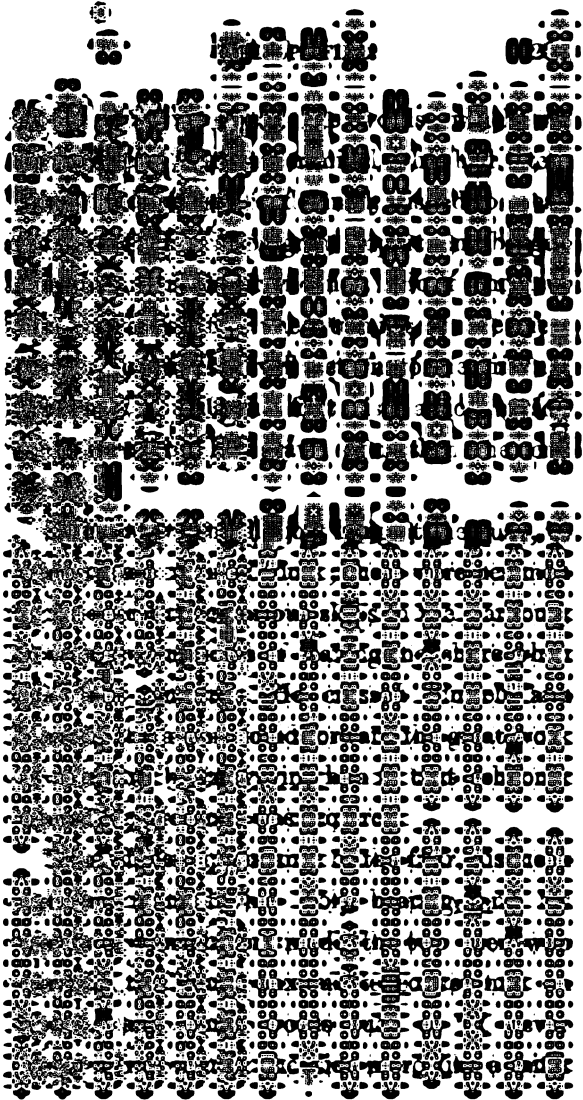
The friar sat uneasy on his chair. It was evident more would be brought to light. The avenues of the court were crowded, and his



Carlos was silent ; and like most guilty men, in endeavouring to prove his innocence, had allowed, in one unguarded moment, the truth to escape him ; never yet was there a guilty man at the bar of justice, who if allowed to speak, did not in some measure hurt his own cause, and brand himself as a culprit. It is the knowledge of this that makes the counsel so often warn the prisoner to hold his tongue—one word, and the case is often lost.

Some angry recriminations between Carlos and Juan, would have taken place, but for the hasty removal of the prisoner until another witness should have arrived, who from weakness of body, and from extreme fatigue after all she had suffered, was unable to attend until the following day, at which time José would be placed at the bar.

Carlos, as he was led away looked at the friar who having bowed his head and placed his hand across his breast, silently and thoughtfully moved through the crowd, and gained the open air. His step was then quickened—nay at such a pace had he moved, that the panting messenger, who almost breathless overtook him,



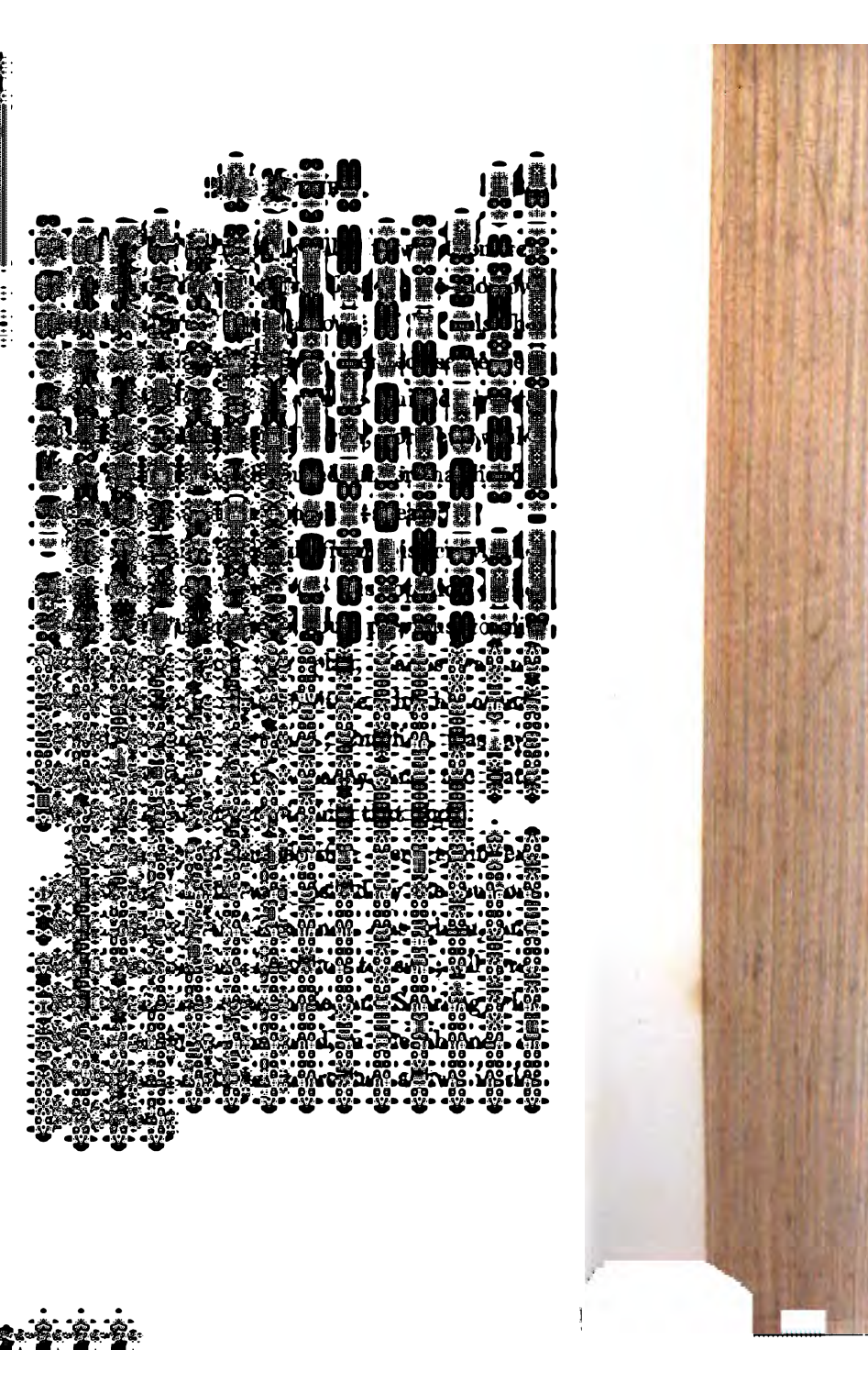
in my life," warned the Captain, that his anxiety had nearly betrayed him. He turned, gave a piastre to the boatmen—thanked them for their exertion, and walked below.

The crew had not been idle ; the cargo was cleared, and the schooner floated at her best sailing trim ; her clearance was the only requisite, and for that, although Snarling attended at the office, it was requisite the Captain should be present ; he called his crew together, and leaving only one man on deck to keep a most vigilant look out, he descended with them into the hold, the only place large enough to hold them all. In a few words the whole truth was told. That Carlos would have been judged by his shipmates for that murder was most certain, for amongst those men who set all law at defiance, they had laws of their own. A murder of a woman would have rendered the criminal subservient to that law, by which he would subject himself to be left on a desert island.

It was a moment of imminent danger ; the whole story of the St. Jago de Cuba affair, of which the crew were in ignorance, was now,

for the first time, told by their Captain ; it was evident that those concerned in the abduction of the girl had been overtaken, or discovered, that the presence of Carlos implied the presence of the schooner, and that the girl, whose nerves were so unstrung as to be unable to give any evidence that day, would, on the following one, mention the whole unvarnished affair ; what was to be done ? To leave him, violated their oath ; to remain, was certain detection ; never had the Spitfire and her daring lawless crew been placed in such a dilemma ; the Spanish and French fleet lay between them and the open sea, and without was the English fleet under her greatest Admiral. This last was a trifling obstacle ; she could not be seized as a prize, for she had a regular American clearance, and likewise, if requisite, an English letter of marque ; but she could not sail, she could not avail herself of her speed, until the clearance was signed ; for the guard boats and gun boats, were unremitting in their scrutiny, and no vessel passed in or out of the harbour, but under their strict surveillance.

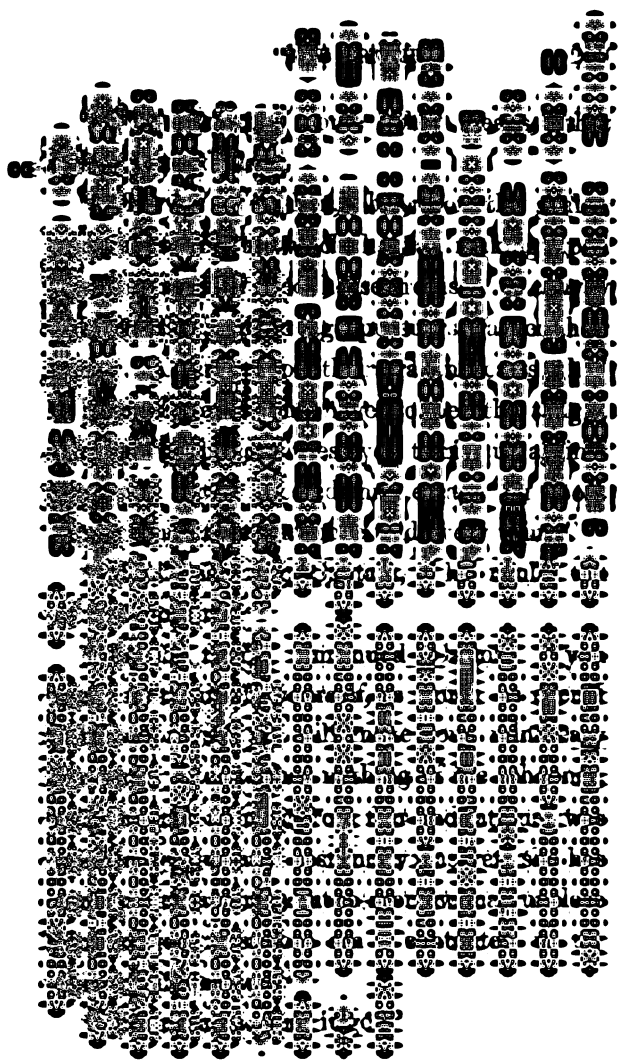
"I come to you, my crew," he said "to make your own resolve;—we are in a difficulty, which I see no power of avoiding; we must in one respect or the other, do an injustice, that is, either to Carlos or ourselves. We are not men to be frightened at shadows; this is no imaginary evil; before to-morrow's sun is set, Carlos must be sentenced to death; a death which he most richly deserves; or we must be bound for ever to the oar of yonder galley, there to waste out our lives. I have only one proposition to make—or rather see but one course to pursue. To act up to the oath which we have sworn, and which I would not violate; for if in one case it is allowed to be disregarded, in another of greater emergency it may be forgotten; I would propose this: in the first place, to obtain the clearance of the vessel directly; I will then return as the friar, and round my body, convey as much of the deep sea lead line as can be wound round me; at one o'clock, we will be on shore opposite the small window, which gives but poor light to his cell; at that hour, he shall attempt his



"You have dallied long, good friar," said Carlos, whose savage countenance betrayed his inmost resolve; "remember you are in my hands, as safely as I am in the charge of the goaler; Juan has escaped by the same means, which I may yet employ; and one word from me to the goaler, would save the Spitfire the honour of your command."

"Men who are infirm of purpose, as regards themselves, are ever suspicious of others," replied the Captain, "if I had been inclined to have left you, I might have evaded even your suspicion; away with this nonsense; unwind this line, it is strong enough to hold you, and of sufficient length to touch the water. I see you have a chair, and therefore the rest is with yourself, at one o'clock, eight or ten of your ship-mates will await you by the moat's side, exactly opposite that window; a disguise will be procured, the boat will be in attendance, the schooner will be ready—you must escape to night, or—"

"You will sail to-morrow," said Carlos, "and I be left here to die."



"We will compare the time—we are exact; at one precisely, as the clock strikes, I will descend; I can swim the ditch, but you must have a rope to pull me out, for the sides are steep, and no one who is in, can without assistance escape. It is a sad business, Captain, and I have some strange misgiving."

"All men have, however buoyant the hope; there is ever a feeling of apprehension that success may not attend an enterprise; but every think is on this cast; we have played a desperate game, and desperate must be the result; let us see that you want for nothing, is the bar loosed?"

"At top and at bottom it is sawed nearly through."

"That must be removed; here is a small phial of cream, wet the saw with that, it will cut more silently and more surely, the line must be fastened in the centre, and the iron placed across the window; but before you descend, try the line, and see if it will reach the water."

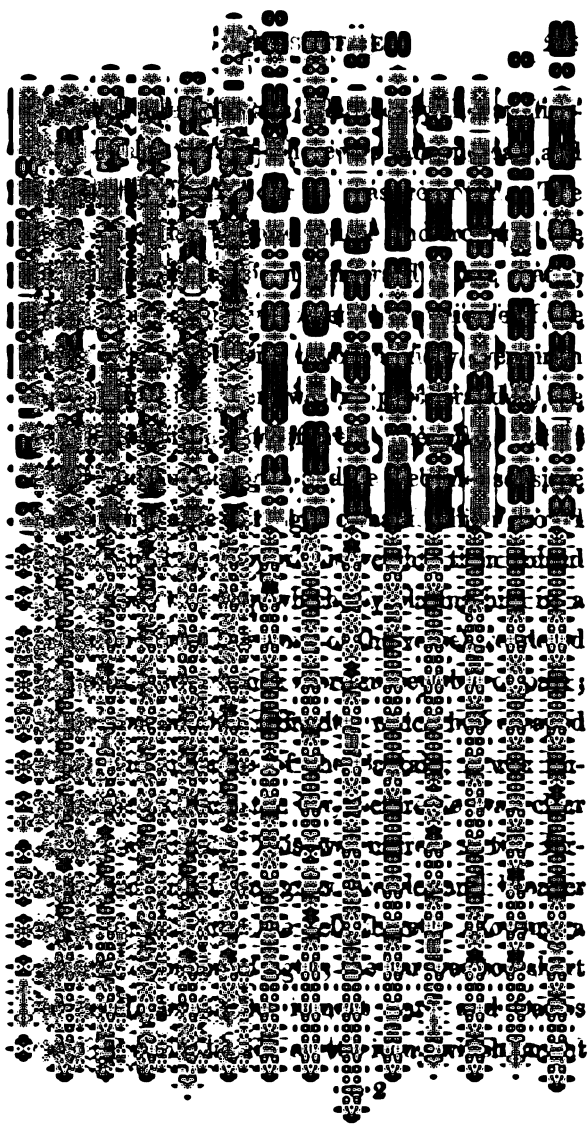
"And if not?"

“Take this whistle, if you dare not descend—and what is there Carlos dare not attempt?—whistle, we shall hear it, and retire, then to-morrow I will bring more. Be careful you try it before you remove the bar; men in desperate alarm, with life or death upon the cast, sometimes are imprudent. Conceal the rope at once; there under that linen; now the shorter time I am here the better. Lie down, make this bundle your pillow—hark, the key turns in yonder lock;—remember one o’clock, and trust to your shipmates. Peace, and rest be with you, young man, and may He whose eye is upon us, watch and preserve you.” The friar passed out, the door was closed, bolted, and barred; and at eight o’clock Carlos was left alone to count the hours until one.

Slowly advances the hand of time when sorrow or sickness bows down the heart of man; swiftly it flies upon the pinion of the fastest flighted bird, when love or joy are present. Every moment seemed an age; the large clock which struck the time and warned the

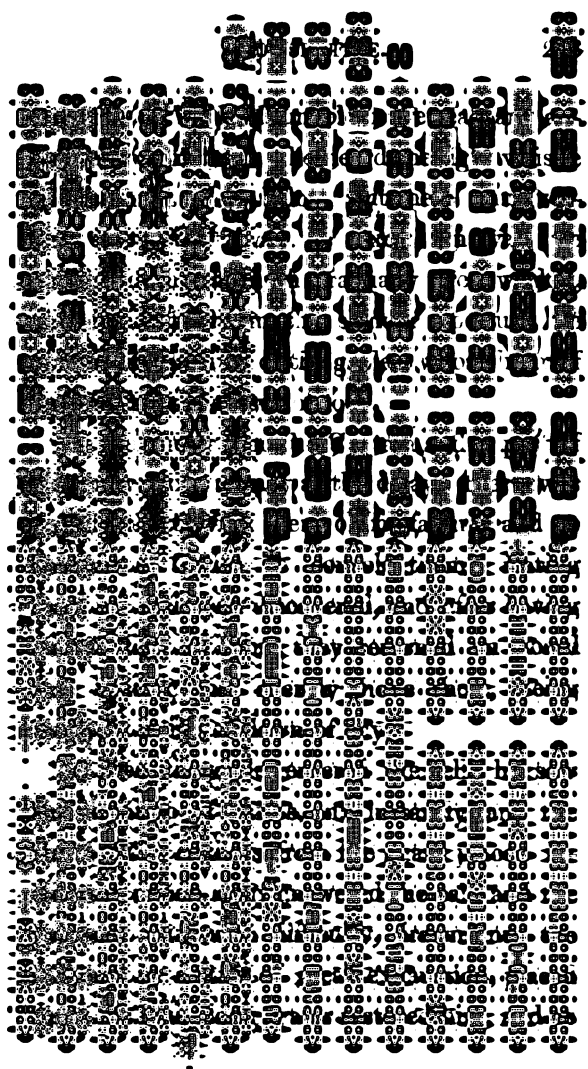
culprit doomed to die, that one short hour of his existence had elapsed, seemed silent from age, and all the dreary solitude of the dungeon grew a thousand fold more desperate from the lingering of the moments; but Time, the most fearful of all adversaries, crept on its steady unerring pace; the large clock tolled the hour of midnight; the step of the gaoler, as he walked through the long passages, resounded in the vaulted roofs; but the dying echo grew less and less, until one universal silence prevailed.

It was now Carlos's time for action, and the activity required rendered his thoughts less irksome. Oh blessing on all exertion which banishes gloominess of imagination, and gives relief to the mind in the soundness of the body! The long line which had been wound round and round the body of the Captain was tried, and Carlos leapt for joy when, on accomplishing his task of hauling it up, about a fathom of the end was dripping wet; the file which had so faithfully performed its duty, was now in requisition and the occasional sharp note which the steel had caused, as it worked its way



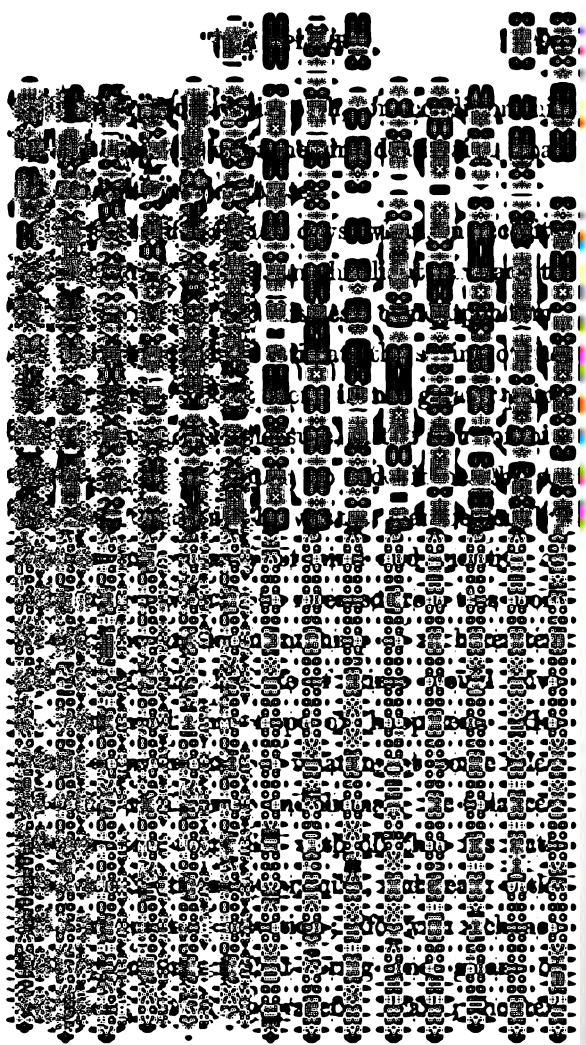
not catch securely in any part between the in and the outside part.

There was no remedy ; discovery was certain in the morning ; he could not replace the bar, and the time approached ; he carefully made a bowling knot in which he placed himself, this was done with the idea, that if his hands refused their office and he fell, the knot would hinder his being immersed in the water and a knife which he had might free him in an instant ; he gained the window and managed to place the bar, without the desperate fall he had anticipated ; his legs were through the aperture, whilst his strong knit hands clung with desperate clutch to the thin rope. The clock struck one ; he forced himself onward ; but oh horror ! — more than horrible ! — the aperture was too small to admit his body ; his hands had fixed the iron and he had relinquished its grasp, and now every effort proved unavailing to reach it again, by which means he hoped to draw himself into his cell. There was he fixed, fearing to fall and yet unable to do it, his hands biting the thin rope by the



it was evident that he could not escape, he was allowed to remain in his old abode. The cord and bar were removed, and the gaoler perceiving that the irons were sawed from his legs did him the favour to place some of double the weight upon him. No one had visited him, but the friar ; he therefore must have been the man who provided the prisoner with means of escape. A guard was despatched to seize and bring him to the goal, whilst a general search was made of the prisoner and his cell, and he was deprived of his file and his knife ; he was then piously recommended to his prayers, and given permission to creep out of the loop hole, if he grew sufficiently thin during the remainder of the night.

Carlos now saw his fate was inevitable ; with all his boldness of manner, he soon gave way to considerable alarm and fear ; he felt that two short days would see him dragged a criminal into the public square and executed, and as he had valued life, now he dreaded its loss ; he wavered within himself as to a confession, in



from the world as a murderer and a thief, with all life's worst apprehensions at its close, and death with the commencement of eternal torment !

" You will be required early enough," said the goaler, " to appear in court ; I suppose your confession can keep until then ?"

" It will not keep a minute."

" Then tell it me ; and if I think it worth while to awaken an alcalde at this hour, when most people but murderers sleep, I will call one."

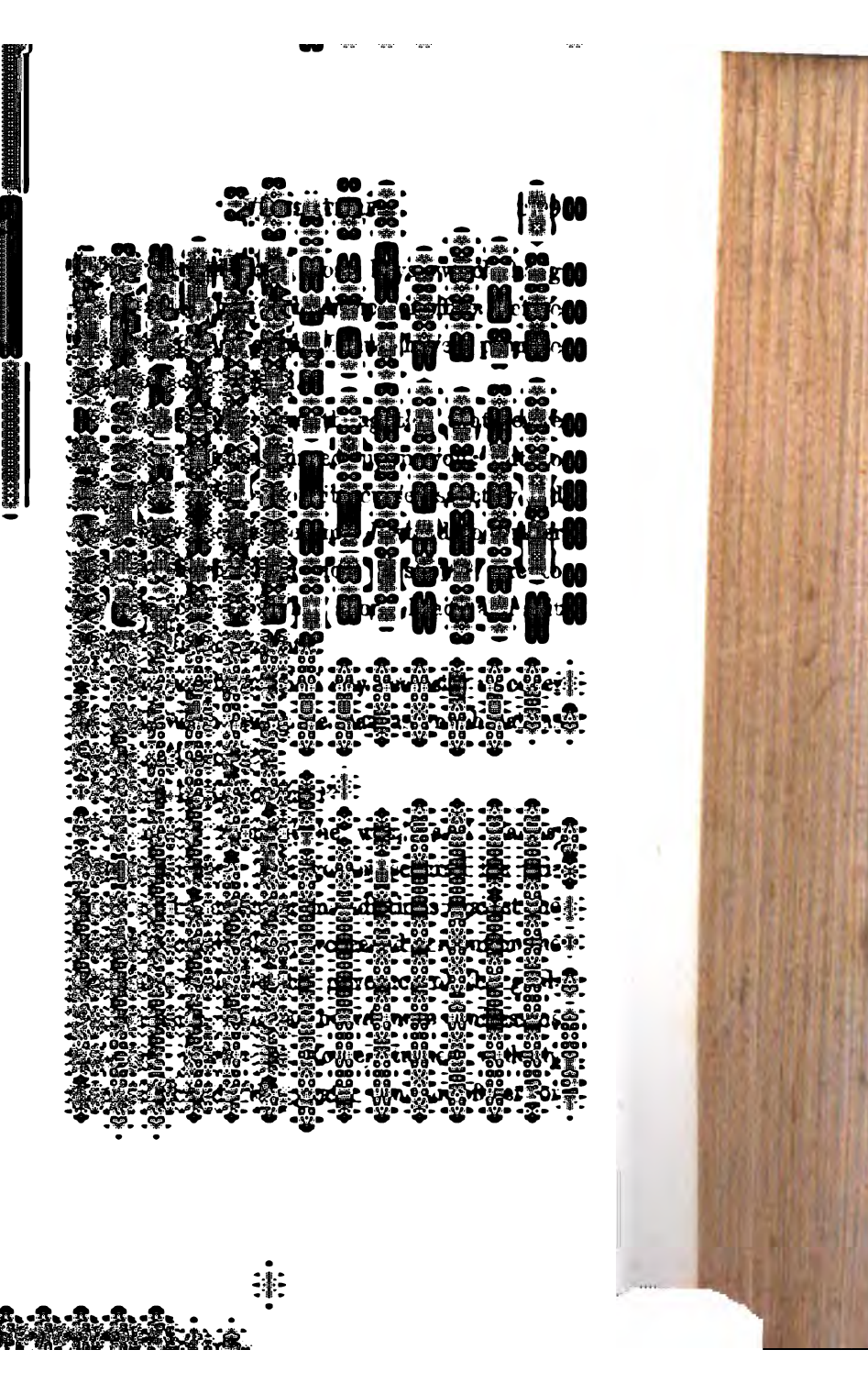
" Delay it at your peril. Confessions such as mine, must be made to men of more power than goalers. I tell you, that the first gleam of light, of which it wants some three hours, will be too late."

At this moment, the noise of the returning soldiers was heard ; and the goaler, saying, " I will come back when I have lodged your confessor in a comfortable cell," locked the door and departed. He soon, however, returned, saying : those friars are the most cunning rascals alive ; we cannot find him."

" And yet," said Carlos, " I could put my hand upon him in a second."

" Where is he ?"

" Asleep, where I shall be soon ; and to-



a priest or an alcalde, or both, but not to trouble him with any such annoyances.

It was late, for it was past four, when the drowsy alcalde came to the goal. It was the same before whom Carlos had been questioned, and nothing but the general good disposition of the magistrate, could have aroused him from his slumbers on such an errand.

"I have much to say, Sir," began Carlos; "already the stars grow fainter from the near approach of day, although from my dark cell I saw them plainly enough before your light came; but I cannot disclose my secret but under a promise that if I bring to conviction forty men, I may be spared."

"It is a vast promise of yours, good man; are they so near that you can at once take them?"

"As surely as the fisherman encloses all his fish in one net."

"They herd together, then; and near us, you say?"

"So near, that I could almost make them

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priest will place the men I shall denounce, far from your power."

"We can close, or rather, keep closed the city gates, and then no one can pass until such time as they shall be taken."

"That will not secure one of them. The harbour must be closed against all egress.

"It can be done;—notice can be sent to the fort. But I must know against whom we are to act."

"Will you promise me my life shall be spared?"

"I cannot;—I have no power beyond my own court, and I should ill perform my duty, if I elicited a confession upon a promise of pardon, which I cannot grant. As far as my influence can be used to forward your views, you may rely upon me."

"I will stand upon the chance." Carlos now made a confession involving all his shipmates. "The testimony of the girl, which was yet to rise up against me this day, will confirm my statement. They will escape this morning; my failing to escape, will be the

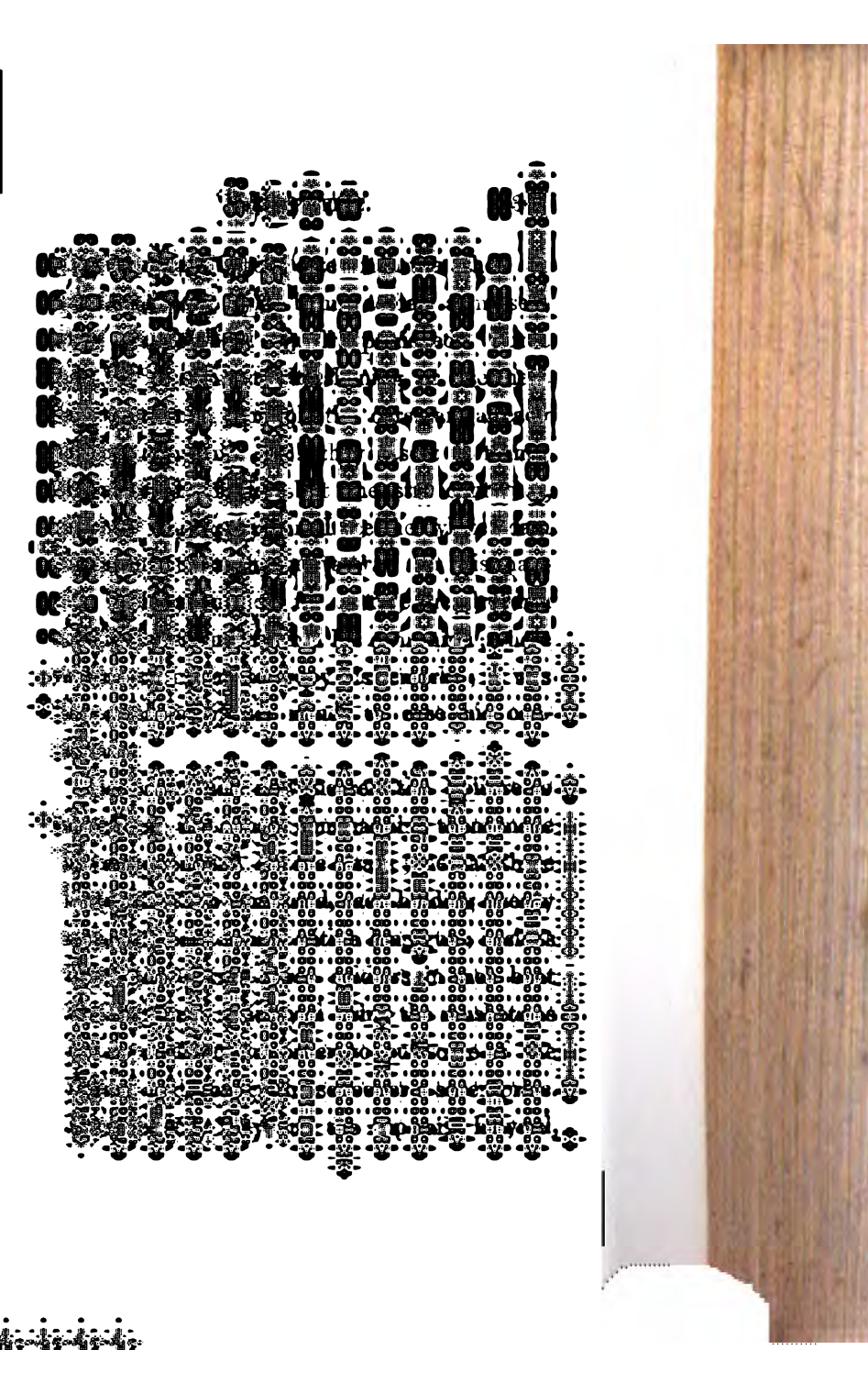
To the officers of each, the pass was obliged to be shown, to see if it corresponded with that already sent. The Captain received some rebuke for weighing before daylight, but his excuse was received, that as some clouds looked heavy to the westward, he wished to gain sufficient offing to run up the straits, should the gale commence; "Merchant's time," said he, "is always valuable, and none," he added, with much sincerity, "more so than mine, at present."

A glass of spirits bribed the officer to be quick;—the Spitfire had already spread all her sails, and was outside of the harbour.

Carlos, whose vagabond life hung upon his perjury, scrambled to his narrow window; the chair had been left him; from this he commanded a view of the offing. There, his last hope fast creeping from him, he saw the schooner. The breeze, though light, was sufficient to impel that beautiful craft through the water; and although an English frigate, the *Euryalus*, was always close in-shore at daylight, to count the combined fleets at anchor, this morning,

The image shows a document page that is almost entirely obscured by heavy noise and artifacts. There are several large, solid black vertical bars running down the page, particularly on the left and right sides. The central area is filled with a dense pattern of black and white speckles and streaks, making any original text completely unreadable. The overall appearance is that of a severely corrupted or damaged scan of a document.

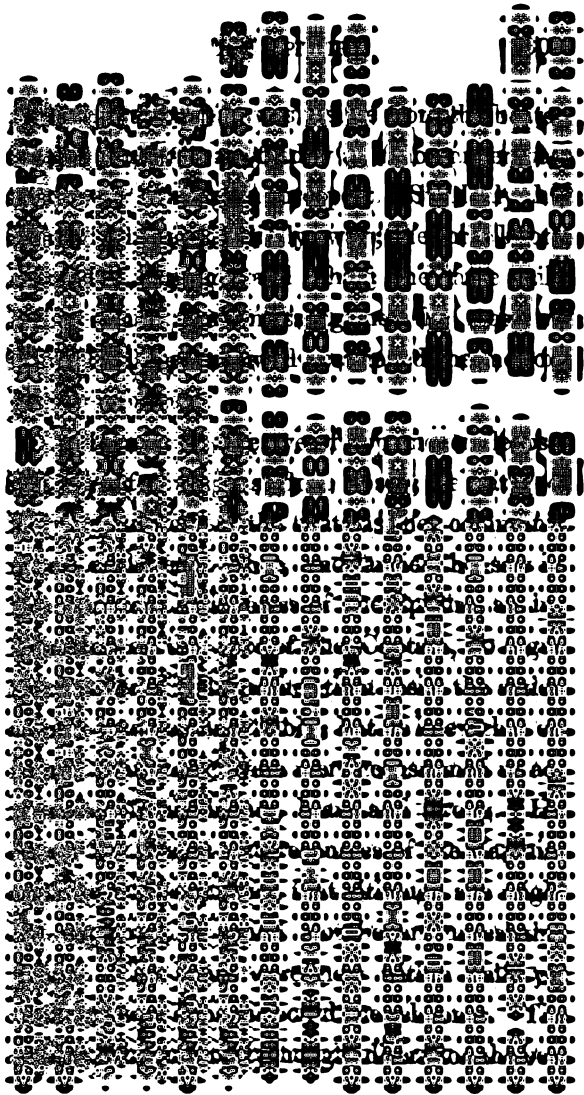
breeze. Carlos strained his neck in endeavouring to see the clearer. The firing continued ; the long guns of the fort still reached beyond her ; but each shot 'marked how the schooner crept from the shore. All hope was nearly gone ; nothing but such as rarely happens, the sudden dismasting of the vessel could render her a prize. Carlos's curse was stopped when he saw three gunboats pulling towards her ; they gained upon her fast ; and if the breeze remained without addition, he would yet see the man who had deserted him, as sure a prisoner as himself. There was a gleam of comfort in the prospect of revenge ; there is no man, however virtuous, who has not a slight tincture of this satisfaction in revenge ; it is called the glory of the coward, but it extends to every human being alive ; and the sneer on the lip often marks how pleased is the person who can inflict a wound by a malicious remark. "They yet shall sit beside me," said Carlos to himself, "there shall be no difference between the murderer and the pirate ; it will be a gratification at least to find that the punishment for



but it was knotted so instantaneously, that the schooner did not lose a foot of ground.

In the mean time, the in-shore frigate had crowded every stitch to catch the breeze aloft, in order to come to the assistance of the schooner, and to the capture of the gun-boats; to board the Spitfire was to obtain certain information as to the number, the efficiency of the combined fleet, and England's greatest admiral was anxious to be surely informed, on a point of such importance. The gun-boats were at least four miles from the harbour's mouth, and the breeze had freshened sufficiently to force the schooner at least three knots an hour through the water. Fatigue had rendered the men, whose constant and best exertions had been given to the oars, weaker and less powerful; they now no longer gained much upon the Spitfire, and perhaps they were a little less inclined to grapple with their enemy, when they remarked the perfect unconcern with which she received the shot.

The colours which had been hoisted to pass the forts, were hauled down, and the schooner



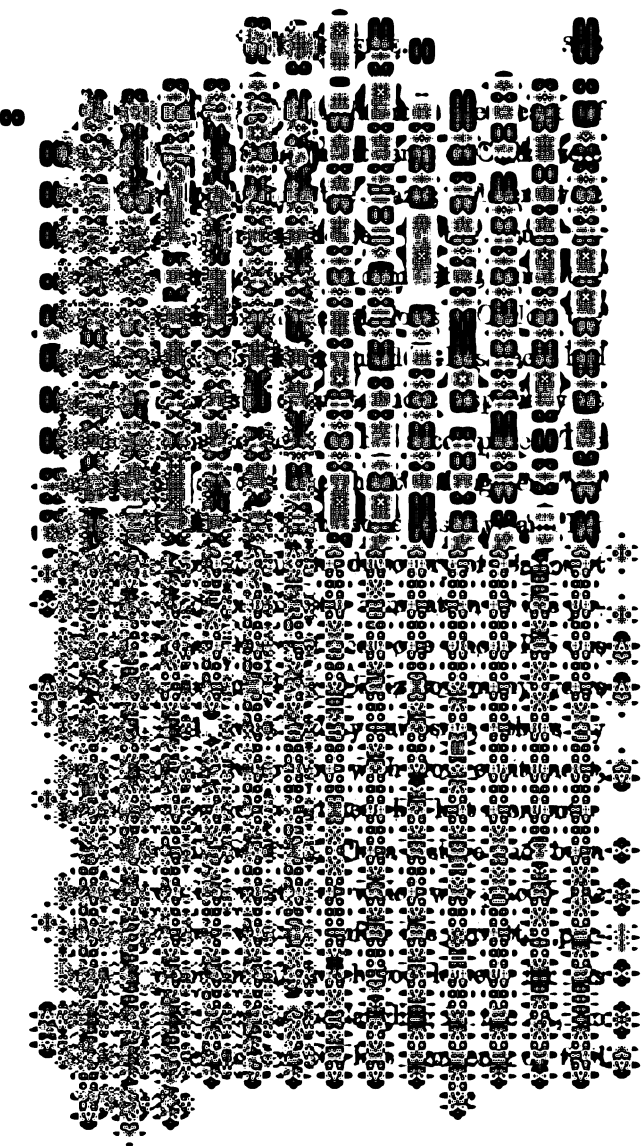
part of valour, and had always maintained that he was the best to command, who gained his victory or his end without bloodshed, now hailed the schooner, and desired her to heave to—to shorten sail, and to surrender to the imposing force, which was now about to assail him.

The answer was a silent appeal to his feelings. Two ports were hauled up astern, and two very suspicious looking guns, having no tompions in their muzzles, looked out as if to answer the hail: this caused another conversation amongst the officers, and the debate finally closed by a determination, not to board at present, but to cut the vessel to pieces with their long guns; for which purpose a little greater distance was desirable; they therefore remained in their present position until the Spitfire had increased her distance, when they opened fire; the shot passed through the sails, nay sometimes struck the hull, but still there was no return. A flaw of wind increased her speed, and the darkening ripple of the water promised a still stronger breeze. It was the Captain's resolve not to fire, not to occasion a

death if it could possibly be avoided ; but he was not in action ; the boarding netting was ready to be triced up, and stones of great weight, which were used generally for ballast were brought on deck, and kept in readiness, to welcome the adventurous crew, who first dared to touch her sides. Neither were the men unarmed, or the guns unloaded ; each man felt that Carlos had betrayed them ; he had violated his oath, which was imperative even if confession saved his life. Against him they felt more revenge than on the condemned wretches who laboured at the oar, and who were fulfilling an unwelcome duty in propelling the gun-boats in the chase ; they had estimated their former companion's failings and courage exactly, they doubted not, that in his attempting to escape, he had been discovered, or that, at the moment his courage failed him, and he had confessed, to save his own life. Even at the moment when the grape shot flew like hail over the Spitfire, the Captain's glass was directed towards the prisoner to catch a parting look at his old companion. He would have risked his life to

save that of Carlos ; but all attempts must be fruitless.

The boats had now dropped considerably astern, the breeze was freshening, there was not the slightest fear of a capture ; the guns ceased to be annoying, and as a signal of the contempt in which their exertions were held, an unshotted gun was fired from the schooner, and Spanish colours showed over the stern. Carlos saw the smoke of the gun, he comprehended at once its meaning, and slipping from his situation sat down in his cell covering his eyes and cursing aloud ; in this position, he vented all his idle wishes, curses, and denunciations, and when under the influence of his last hope, he again clambered to the narrow aperture, the Spitfire had shortened sail to the breeze and was running at the rate of ten knots an hour, standing towards Cape Trafalgar ; the boats had returned to port, and the frigate a long way to leeward was in chace of the schooner. He knew how useless that would be, and in deep despair he cowered into the corner of his cell, and awaited his fate.



humanity, no standing erect whilst the fatal noose is fastened to the beam, and then no sudden drop to show to all the dying effort of the lingering sufferer. Here the criminal sits on the chair; if cowardice palsies his limbs, the quivering is unnoticed; if he is hardened in iniquity and meets death with all the indifference of a Mahomedan, the disgusting sight is wisely veiled from the public. Sitting in the chair, an iron clasp encircles his neck; this moves on an iron upright fastened to the back of the chair, and can be reduced in size, or enlarged by means of a screw; the executioner stands behind the criminal, and the condemned wretch is spared the knowledge of him who deprives him of existence; when the last prayer is said, the screw is suddenly moved, the iron circle more closely confines the neck; there is no motion of the body, no convulsive spasm, the neck is broken in a second, and the criminal a corpse—such was the death which awaited Carlos.

From the prison to the church and from the church to the place of execution, lines of troops

kept the centre clear from the populace; but even the awful scene, too dreadful for delicate nerves to witness from the crowd, was to be observed from the neighbouring windows, and Carlos's death was the means of speculation and of traffic.

As the public interest became more intense, seats at windows were sold at a high price, and more was given to see a cruel sight than would have been paid to have witnessed a coronation. Such is human nature! we would rather be awe stricken than pleased.

On the platform were only two persons, one a priest dressed in that garb which announced him as belonging to the Inquisition; his face was veiled; not a feature was visible; but in the deep and sombre garb of that infernal fanaticism, the man was concealed in the demon; the other was the executioner, he too was veiled, but he stood far away from the priest knowing that the power of the latter was greater than his own. One could only rob the body of life, by a process as decent as it is humane; the other inflicted dying tortures, and

caught from the writhings and broken sentences of the sufferer, words which provided another victim.

Even the executioner trembled at his presence; none dared question him why he came there—the officers of the Inquisition, were superior to all; when they spoke, a sigh alone was the answer. Children could be torn from the parents, the wife separated from her husband, the dearest friend snatched from his companion, and the one who was left, blessed the sacred order, or they knew that they themselves should follow; a sorry proof how far fanaticism has upheld religion, and almost enough to shake the faith of the strongest, when cruelty is the means by which faith is promulgated.

The noise of the muffled drum was now heard. Carlos was about to be shrived in the church and the last prayer was to be offered to his God in his own sanctuary. In the front were eight or ten boys, bearing candles and surrounding a priest who bore a large crucifix; then came some criminals from the goal, whose lives were pro-

longed beyond the day, which was to show them the method of their execution. They were all dressed in black, and walked slowly and dejectedly, fearing to meet the eye of one, who perhaps was in ignorance of their shame ; then came some more boys, swinging censers, preceding another priest who bore a smaller crucifix ; behind him, his arms secured in front, his head uncovered, walked Carlos, holding in his hand, not a crucifix, not the holy record of a Saviour's life, that was denied him to examine, but a picture of a woman lying dead from a blow, the stiletto by her side. How changed was Carlos the murderer, the criminal ! there was no spark of vivacity in those large dark eyes ; there was no nimble tread of youth in his step ; but he moved on slowly, heavily, the fatal picture ever before his eyes ; and yet one hour before, he had resumed his former cheerfulness, and spoke of his burial to the goaler, and even in that manifested the worst feeling of our nature.

"Can no man," he said to his keeper, who from the moment of his condemnation had

never left him ; “ can no man who is to be executed, choose his own burial ? ”

The goaler having some good feeling in him, endeavoured to change the conversation ; but the question was repeated with these words in addition ; “ Are you too proud of your situation as guard over a manacled man, to deny him an answer ? ”

“ Your friends may buy your body and bury it where they like ; but not in consecrated ground.”

“ Friend ! ” said Carlos, “ I have betrayed them who have left me ; I am a sailor ; could I not be carried out to sea, shrouded in a hammock, with two shots fastened to my legs, and dropped into two hundred fathoms of water.”

“ It might be done, if you have friends and money ; but it is a curious wish, and one which can hardly be gratified, even in your situation.”

“ I would have those,” said Carlos, with a bitter sneer, “ die, who feed upon this carcase. I cannot infuse a poison in my skin which will kill the worms, but if I am buried afloat and far

at sea, the greedy shark which swallows me, would die of the savoury morsel, which attracted him."

"How so?" asked the goaler.

"In swallowing me, he would swallow the shot;—they would cause an indigestion, even in a shark's stomach. Ha, ha," he continued, laughing hideously, "the very thought makes me merry, for it carries revenge, even beyond my life."

The procession moved on slowly. A drum beat its miserable note, and now and then, a hymn, sung by the boys who led the procession, relieved the horrid monotony. As Carlos passed, the line of spectators fell on their knees, and in wishing a repose for his soul, fervently and devoutly crossed themselves. Carlos would have sneered at the mock prayer of those, who whilst they offered up their words, allowed a human creature to need them, by an execution.

He entered the church;—the loud note of the organ—the solemn and impressive service of the dead, struck upon him, and relieved him of the

hardened demeanour in which he had screwed himself up to meet his fate ; even as he bowed his knees, and heard the deep voice of the priest, a tear fell from his eyes, and he shuddered at being torn from this bright and lively world, before he had known the ripe age of manhood.

There was a pause in the service, and the church was still as death ; the confessor advanced to catch his last voice, to give him all of humane consolation ; to turn his soul from this earth ; to lift his heart to God. He placed his ear near the mouth of Carlos, and the long catalogue of crime was again poured into the ear of the priest, and Carlos would have prolonged his scenes of daring and strife, but for the interruption of the priest. "Enough ! enough !" whispered the holy man, "of these, you now most solemnly repent?"

"I do," said Carlos. "But others weigh heavy upon my mind."

"They are all alike; one, like a day of man's life, is but a picture of another; our time grows short; already have we prolonged it unneces-

sarily ; the axe is laid to the root, and in a few minutes the tree must fall ; the dead must bury the dead—you are now dead unto sin, for you can sin no more—your deeds have been dark, but there is a light of hope above—to Him I will pray, and through the intercession of the holy saints, your soul may be released from purgatory.” The priest turned round—the procession immediately moved out of the church, and the last sound of the organ’s beautiful note, was lost in the distance.

Carlos now no longer looked at the picture ; each step he took, shortened his road of life ; there before him stood the platform ; there was the chair in which he was to die ; there the man who was paid for the committal of his legal murder ; and there stood the priest of the inquisition : Carlos, even Carlos felt his flesh creep upon his bones, as he saw that emissary from a living hell, waiting perhaps to claim him ; he would have spoken, but the priest chaunted in prayer. The crucifix was held on high, and his voice dwindled into a useless whisper.

It was an awful and imposing sight ; far as the glance could reach, were crowds of people kneeling, and scarcely daring to raise their eyes. None stood as he ascended the scaffold, but the executioner and the priest of the inquisition ; no sooner had he gained the platform than the latter placed his hand upon him ; a cold shivering ran through all his veins, and he tottered rather than walked to the chair. Not a word was said ; the executioner fixed the fatal ring ; even the priest who had accompanied him dared not approach the higher power of the inquisition, and one word from that priest, would have saved the prisoner his execution, and conveyed him to a worse and more terrible end. A slight signal from the priest was understood by the executioner, as warning him to retire a few paces from the chair ; a small crucifix was now held, and Carlos summoned to make his last confession. Faithfully, did he again run over the principal events of his life until the murder, then he stopped.

“ My son,” said the priest, “ have you told me all ?”

"All!" said the trembling culprit.

"In all your actions with the pirates, were you not sworn to observe the strictest secrecy?"

"I was."

"Have you ever violated that oath?"

Carlos trembled; but as death was evident, a clear bosom became desirable. He answered "I have."

"When?" asked the priest.

"Within these few days; to save my own life, I endeavoured to forfeit theirs."

"What was the punishment, the pirate law affixed to that solemn breach of confidence?"

"Death! or worse, placed on a desert island, with sufficient to live upon for a week, with all the horrors of dying, and the means of subsistence within reach."

"The law of Spain has condemned you to die; those to whom you were bound by the most solemn of all oaths, doom you to die; the church has shrived you—your moment is come—your last words?"

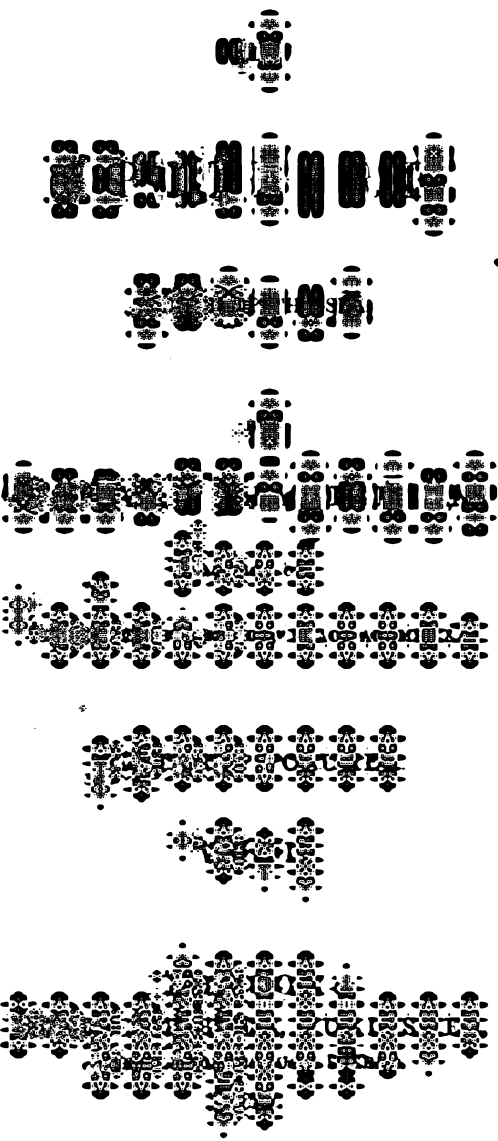
"The pirates broke their oath; they were

sworn to assist their friend to the last moment of his life."

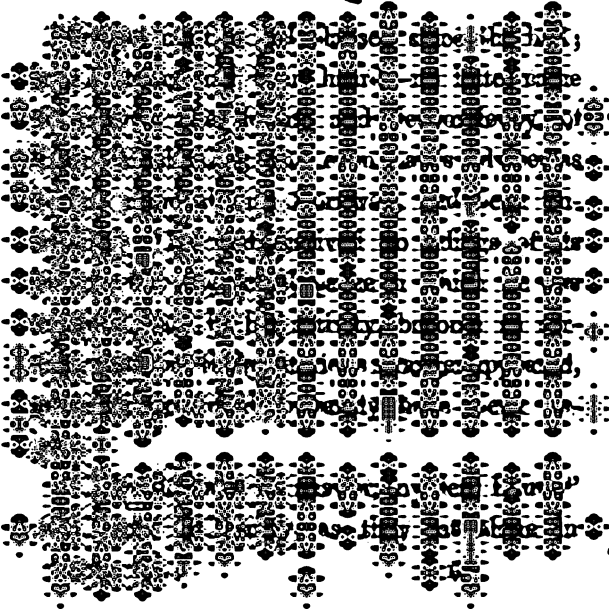
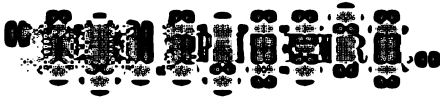
"Carlos," said the priest, as he beckoned the executioner to advance, "your life has been one of willing crime, and in your death, the fearful lie still gurgles in your throat; your companions came to the spot appointed, to the last they attend upon you: in the name of the crew of the Spitfire, I, their Captain condemn you." Carlos made one effort to speak, to call for aid. The executioner received the signal from the priest—one sudden turn was given to the screw—a slight convulsion of the limbs occurred, and on the platform remained the priest the executioner and the corpse.

END OF VOL. II.

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solitary grandeur, "that I can understand. You see how my father's attentions increase, even as you seem more retiring; come, Laura, do make yourself my mamma, and I will be an obedient child."

"It sounds strangely in my ears, the request that I should marry your father, and you yourself are a mother; you might call me your child's grandmother; and that," said Laura, archly, "would make me look a young and interesting bride."

"Although, my dear Laura, that might sound strangely, as you say, divest it of all imagination, and the difference is really nothing very alarming. My father married when he was only twenty, and, at this moment, I am not yet that age; you are nineteen—so that all the immense difference is only twenty years."

"That is true," said Laura, musing; "but at any rate, you must admit, that in marrying him, I should marry a man old enough to be my father."

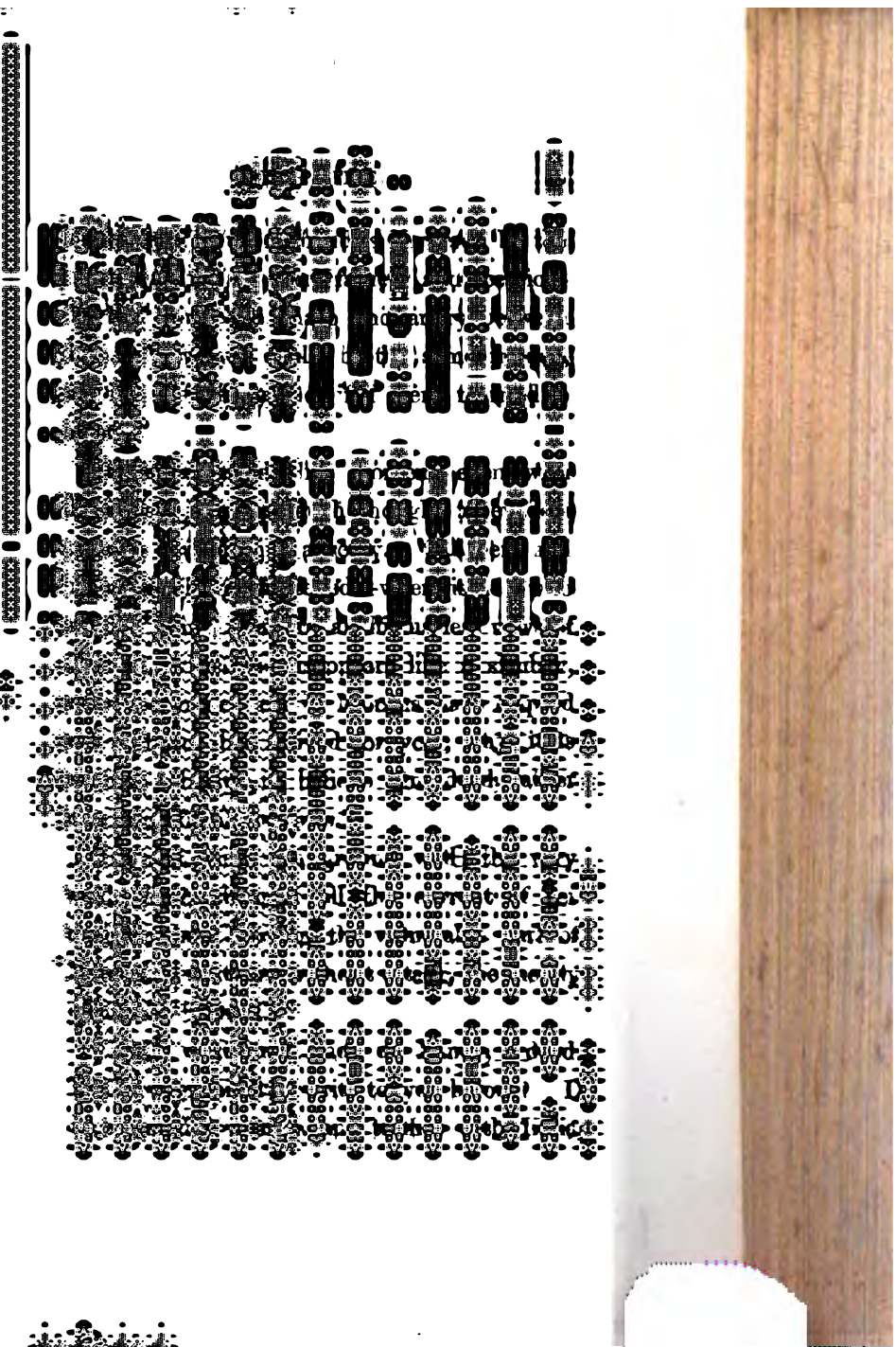
"And so does every woman," replied Mar-

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would soon learn to make the worse the better cause, and to persuade your listeners that marrying a man who is a grandfather, to a girl of nineteen, is much more desirable than to marry her to one she loves, of twenty-four years of age. I admire the good feeling which leads you to support your father's pretensions, but you must excuse me, if I become a judge in my own case, examine the evidences of my own heart, and sum up differently from your expectations."

"I own I am warm in the cause, Laura; and perhaps my own personal convenience renders me more so. You see how we are situated—not a soul comes near this large and frowning castle, to me, a prison only enlivened by your society; of course, then, I am anxious to preserve the being, who makes my life comparatively comfortable. We should be one family—all friends."

"And yet," said Laura, "I doubt much the friendship which really exists between Sir Ronald and your father; one seems always speaking as if the other was afraid of him;



although the voyage is long, and oftentimes perilous, yet has he ever found means of conveyance for his letters ; and even when busied in robbing some merchant of Montezuma's plume, even then from Mexico, a place almost unknown to us, excepting from fabulous history, which has paved the streets with gold, like a second El Dorado, even then, his letters came. If he lives, he has forgotten you ; if he is dead, the sooner he is forgotten the better."

" I know, Margaret, you say this without any intention of hurting my feelings, but you wound them most dreadfully, and wound me in a manner difficult, indeed, to be cured ; still, I can alleviate the pain I cannot entirely obliterate, by affirming my unaltered intention to be true to him, and never allow another to occupy his place, until I am certain that death has removed him beyond all doubt, all possibility of his return. I am not insensible to your father's kindness, but I could live here with Albert, and be happy ; but with your father for my husband, I must be miserable.

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"But your husband would avert such a disgrace to his name?"

"My husband is a patriot, he knows no good but his country's good; examples prevent a repetition of offence, and the impartiality of the law, which would condemn the high as well as the lowly born, is the pride of our countrymen. It would be impolitic to interfere with a just administration of the law."

"It would be a crime to allow a brother to perish without an effort to save him."

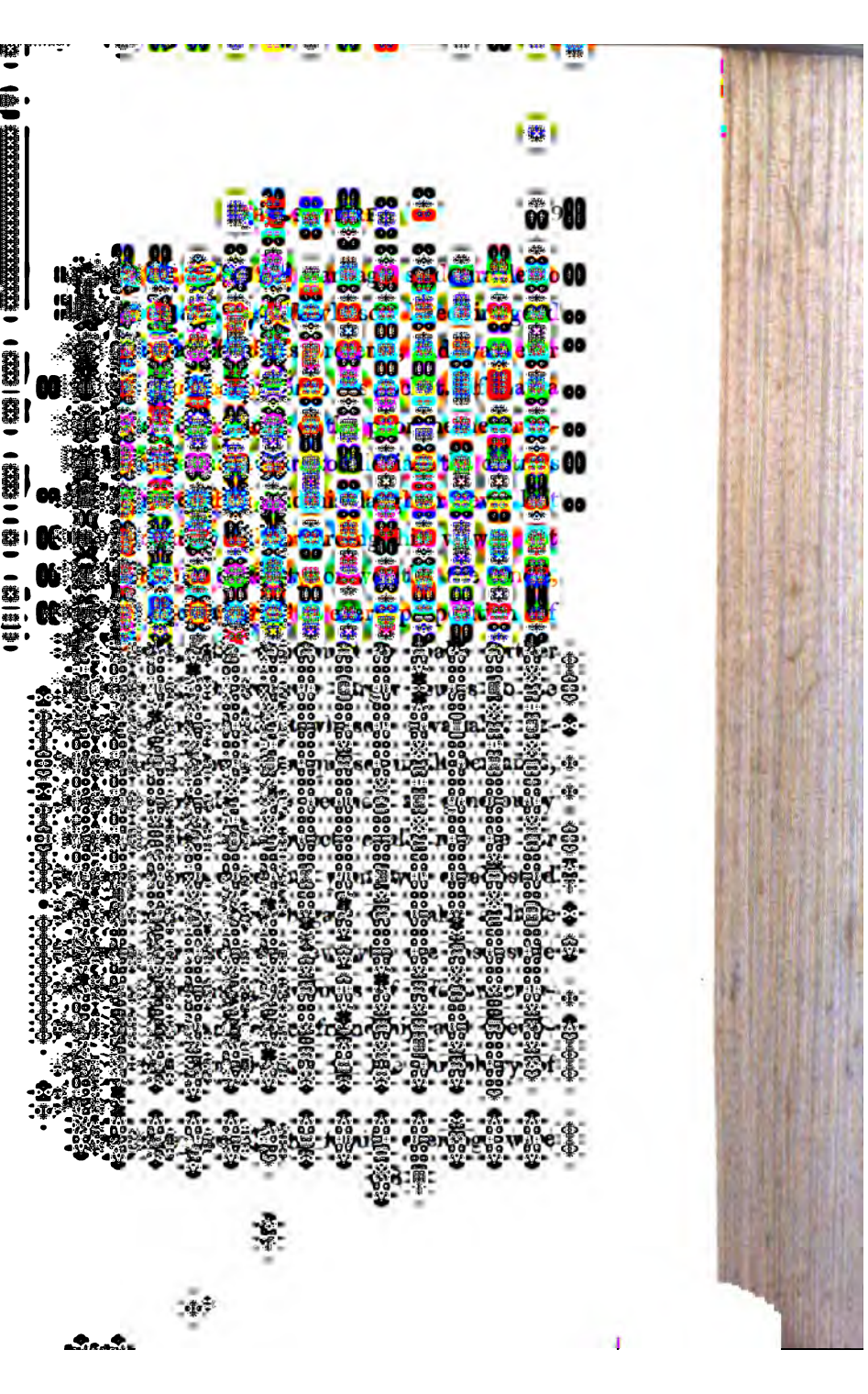
"We should try of course my dear, to move Sir Ronald to apply to the government, but—"

"But," interrupted Laura, with great emotion, "the certain death of the brother would be no very disagreeable news."

"Remember your promise of the month—"

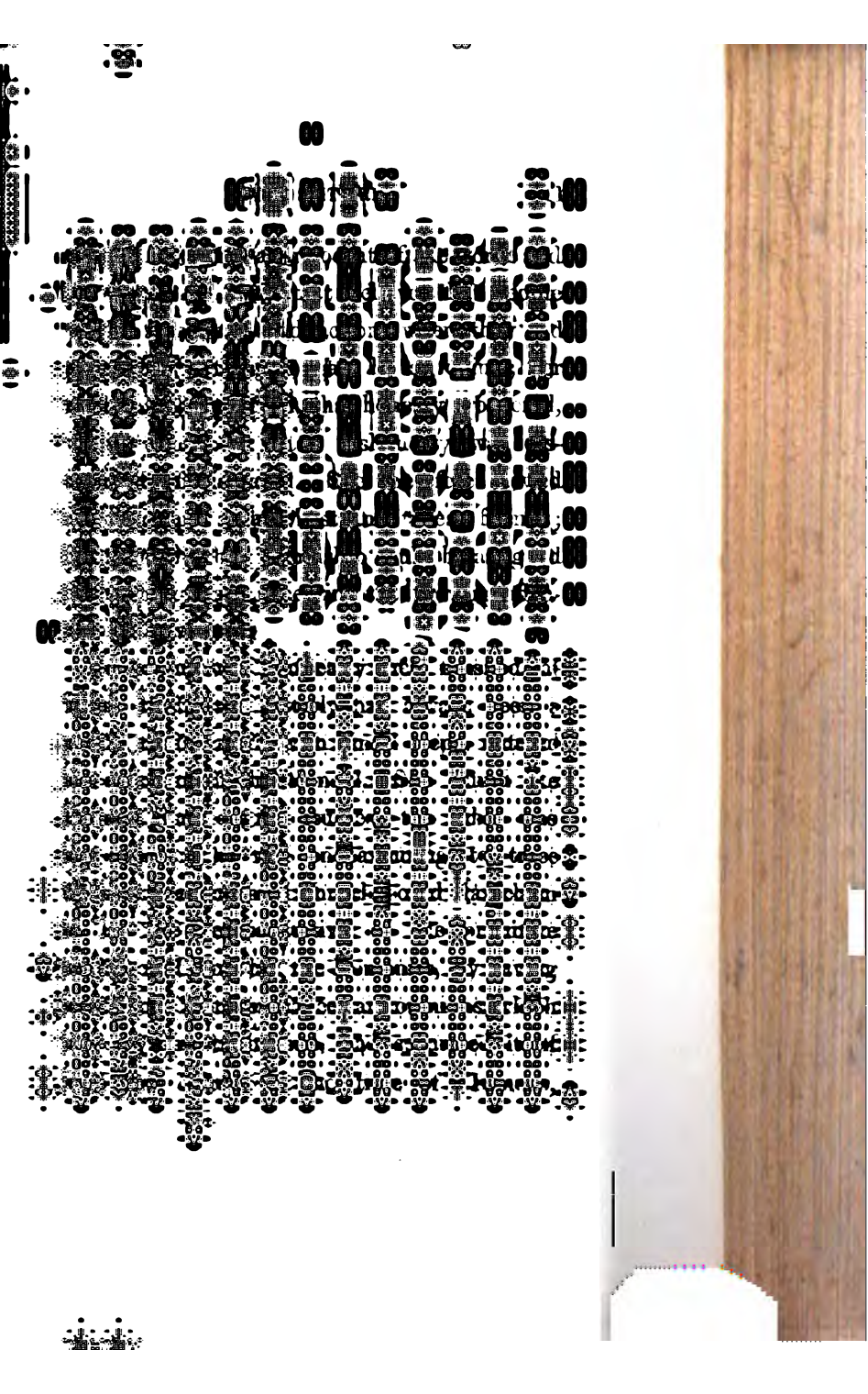
"My word is pledged, and that is sacred."

This comfortable little fencing, with the peculiar sharpness of the thrusts and probes, did not inance the friendship of these ladies; Laura was satisfied that either her prospects of wealth, her jewels, or some unknown cause



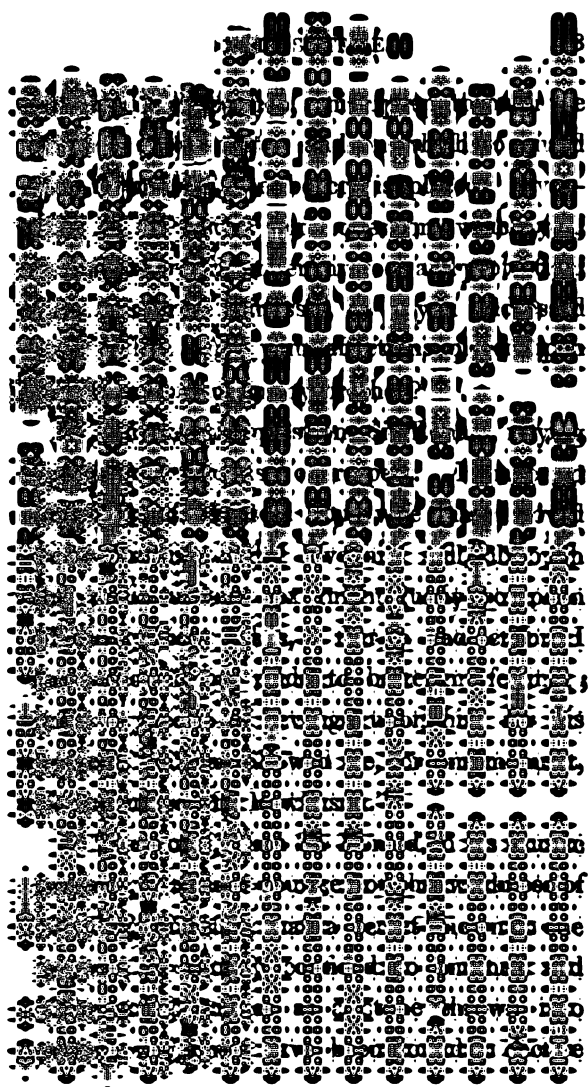
more sociable ; only one retained his austerity, only one seemed to have a heaviness of heart, which no time could chase away. Sir Ronald was ever silent, ever cheerless ; the wit of Rawlinson on his exquisite mimicry of the country folks although it convulsed the ladies, never drew the slightest smile from the face of Sir Ronald : he was ever lost in his own thoughts, ever disposed to silence and restraint ; he had been informed of Laura's answers to his wife's request ; the time stole on, and the day before the total elapse of the month arrived.

They had breakfasted, and merry were the looks of Rawlinson and his daughter at their victim. But Sir Ronald never appeared to notice them ; he had, on entering the room, taken her hand, and in a whisper, conveyed his wish, that she should come secretly to his library. She rather startled at his proposition, but resolved to obey the summons. She thought perhaps, that Sir Ronald was about to offer her some present, or to give that, which the privilege of age sanctions—the unwelcome article, advice. Laura was all kindness, all



Clement and Polycarp. It was a subject upon which Sir Ronald loved to dwell, for in the dissensions of the various churches, he was led to imagine, that the truth was not firm in either, and hence he shaped his course his own way and endeavoured to reconcile to himself the strange doctrines he believed. He carefully placed a mark in the book, and scratched the margin with his nail, as if to resume on another occasion the search which amused him.

“ Sit down, Miss Mackenzie,” he said ; “ I claim half an hour’s conversation with you, on a point of much importance. I am informed, that to-morrow you are to give my wife a promise, to receive the addresses of Mr. Rawlinson,—nay, hang not down your head, the most excellent, the most virtuous, the mildest, the meekest of your sex, need not blush to own a well placed attachment; marriage is the object of your lives, it is the beacon, the light for which you anxiously watch, until you either reach the harbour in security, or are wrecked



that a woman only keeps one secret, and that is the secret of her own dishonour ;—that you are prone to prattle, is certain ; but that you are deficient always in prudence, I doubt. On me depends your happiness, or your misery. Nay, start not, I shall not harm you ; if your skin was as fine as a butterfly's wing, not the slightest spot should be seen from my touch. Can *you*, you a woman, keep a secret, which concerns yourself ?”

Sir Ronald asked the question in his common, slow, impressive, manner, at the same time, looking as if he doubted the possibility of such a wonderful and almost unnatural effort.

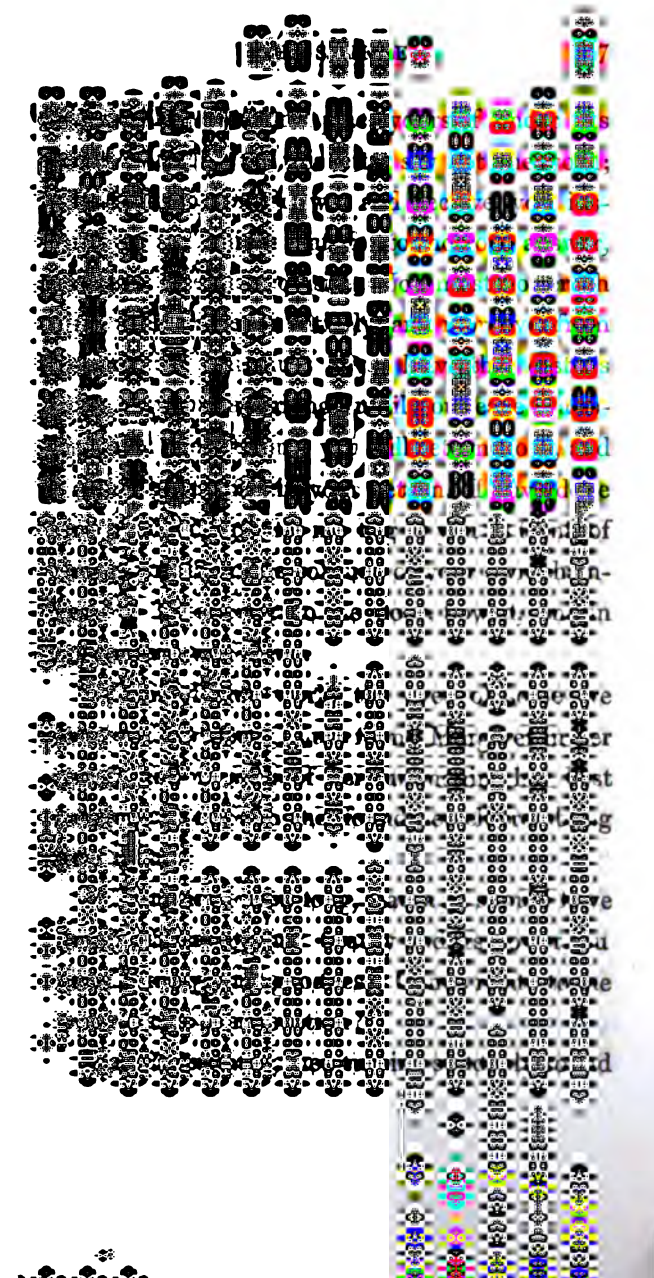
“ Sir,” Laura replied, with all the dignity of an offended woman, “ if you disbelieve the power of our sex to keep a secret, why do you insult the sex by offering one ?”

“ Miracles have occurred,” said Sir Ronald, “ and in these latter days are believed ; let a miracle be wrought upon you ; keep the secret which I shall relate to you, carefully ; and, above all, do not whisper it : nay, not the

reconcile yourself to the paltry excuse of female revenge; attribute his silence to its proper cause; not to neglect, but to miscarriage; the seas are treacherous, and the voracious wave bursts upon the reeling vessel and sinks her. It is possible your letters might be lost; wait and do not, for a moment's pique, allow a villain, a heartless villain, to clutch such innocence as that."

Laura startled; the brother had sued for forgiveness to an offended brother; and now rose up in all bitterness against the father of his wife;—she stood eagerly watching him, and never attempted to answer.

"You do wisely," he continued; "whenever a man is inclined to garrulity, listen and learn his mind; it is sufficient to answer, when the answer urges him to a reply. The word villain, I leave in your heart to ponder over; give him no licence to talk or to dally with you; be to him civil but firm; haughty when the insolence of his glance falls upon you, proud, and dignified when he addresses you. Give him no excuse for being by your side, but write this



she kissed her friend and said, "It related to nothing very particular."

"I know him better, Laura, he never has had any one in his study these two years, half so long as you have been there this day; you could not have gazed at each other in stupid silence all this time; Sir Ronald's eyes only fatigue themselves over books, and his tongue breaks its restraint only when my father or Blackburn are present. Come, Laura, begin, there can be no secret between my husband and yourself; no, that is impossible, and if the impossibility could be erased, so improper that I will not grow jealous by suspicion."

"I cannot answer you more than this, Sir Ronald implied that Albert lived, and would soon be here."

Lady de Lancy started from her seat, "Here!" she exclaimed "here! then let him come, for my resolve is taken;" she instantly left the room and Laura was pleased at the unusual solitude of her chamber. For some time she pondered over the advice, and she felt from Margaret's sudden manner that she had

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large and desolate apartments, and ran to the village ; she placed the letter in the box, and felt all the relief a general would experience, who, being nearly surrounded, finds means to send his order for the approach of a near ally.

Margaret met her on her return. " You must have been anxious about your letter, Laura ; why trouble yourself about that which is every day done by a servant. Now, may I ask to whom you wrote ? "

" To Mr. Law," replied Laura.

" You have ever consulted my father about that correspondence, why now desert his advice and trust to your own ; women's letters seldom are conclusive in the eyes of legal men. Of course you kept a copy ? "

" No," replied Laura, " on this occasion, I never made a copy."

" I guess it," said Margaret with a laugh, " I guess it, you foolish girl, you have written to Law to ask your last hope as to Albert's return ; that is it, you dare not deny it, for you ever speak the truth. Come, tell me, girl, have I guessed right ? "

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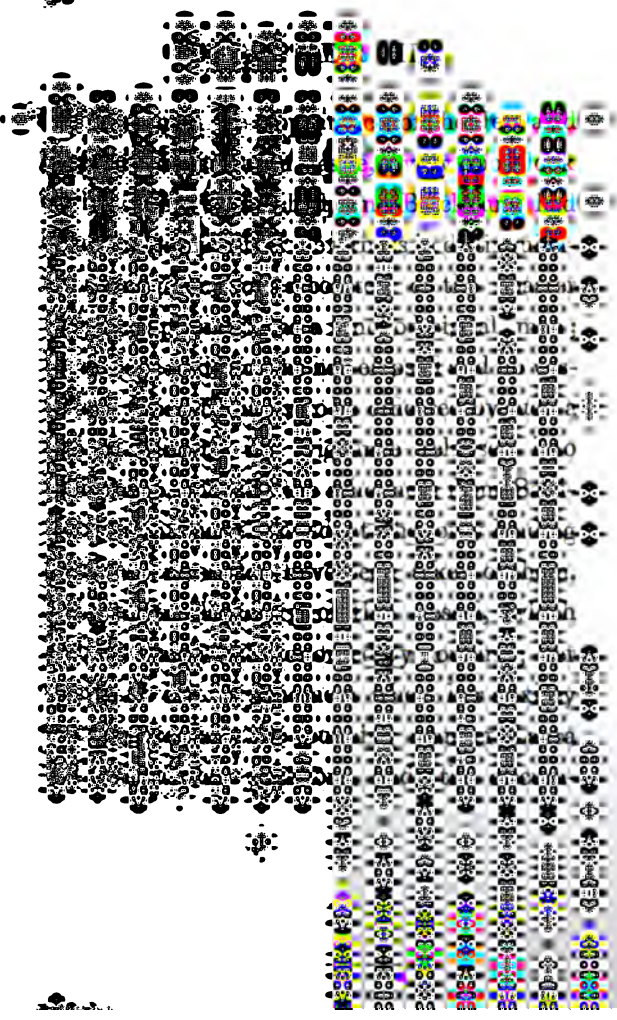
upon the sofa in her own room, whilst Lady de Lancy, baffled in her hope, felt the desire of fathoming this incident more and more. She walked slowly to and fro, in the long drawing room, her eyes resting upon the broad expanse of the ocean ; there was a speck upon it, the glass magnified it into a ship.



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stance of the letter, made the sudden discovery of this vessel an object of more interest than if half the navy had manœuvred off the coast. A note was instantly dispatched to Rawlinson, and the dark looking Blackburn was placed on the look out. The vessel, although a very rakish looking craft, skimmed by with a fair wind, and soon was lost in the distance, to leeward.

"She is gone, Sir," said Blackburn; "and without the wind changes she could not regain her ground until to-morrow."

"That's right," said Rawlinson; "shut that door; when you and I talk, we don't want any long-eared nimble-tongued women to overhear us; firstly, what brought you back before your time?"

"I went faster than I thought: I met a man in a gig, who gave me a lift on the road, and I was equally fortunate in my return."

"Why it's a miracle man, two gigs going along so deserted a road as this! Well, you got to the cottage—now go on."

"It's just the place as will suit your purpose,

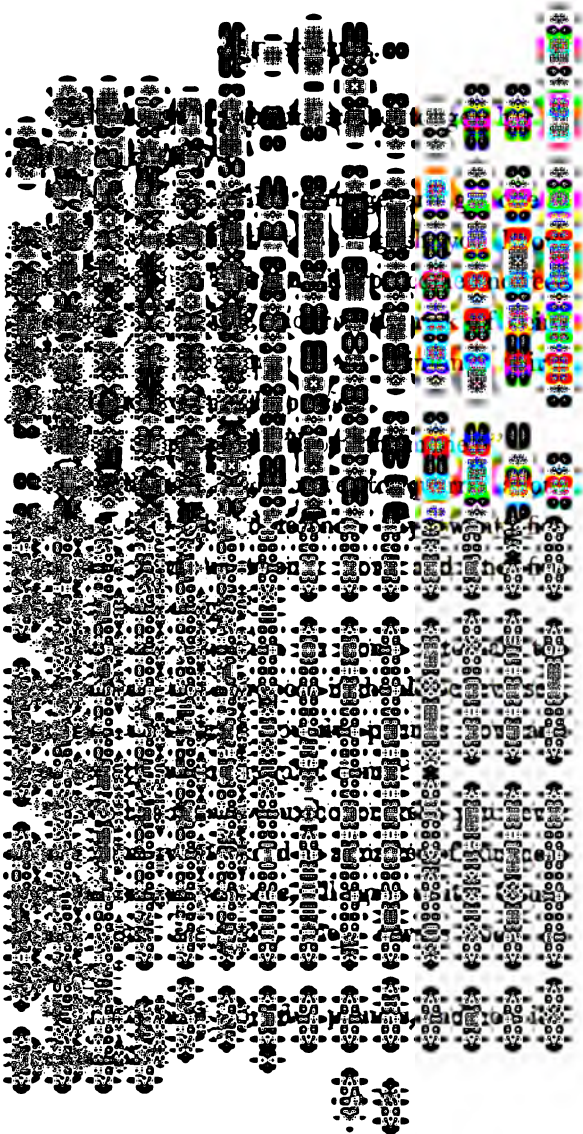
and asked the old woman to put on her spectacles and dislodge some spiders which seem to have the range of the apartments unmolested."

"It is all well arranged; but did you see if there were any kitchen utensils?"

"Quite enough for three of us; the old lady says she can cook a bit, when she can get it to cook, but that for the last month she has not seen a soul with a blue apron and steel hanging to him, and poor old soul she doubted, if the butchers had not left the country and gone to town to see the illuminations for the large ship fight, that I told her about."

"We must send some things there to-morrow, and then all is prepared."

"Aye! all, but one thing; you forget, master, that in these concerns any rope in England might be strong enough to hang all concerned. Now I have no doubt that when it came to the law of the business, you would slip your neck out of the noose and leave me to dangle at the gibbets; and so before we begin, I should like to touch a little of the blunt."



"Yes, the money part; understood well enough, but how is the job to be done?"

"You must look out like a cat after its prey, and pounce upon her when she takes those sentimental walks, about four o'clock."

"But suppose it rains, and she does not walk, why I shall be obliged to pay for the chaise, and soon have no more of this money than would jingle on a tombstone."

"Don't take her in a post-chaise, you lout you, get your own covered cart with a trotter in it, place her out of sight, then what nobody sees, nobody suspects."

"You are a man of wisdom, surely," said Blackburn, "lord love me, why I intended to take her like a lady."

"Take her in a hearse if you like, only take her."

"The day, Sir?"

"Any day after to-morrow; here take this key of the shrubbery, it will admit you by the gate opposite. Sir Ronald you know will not notice *your* being there, and Lady de Lancy will imagine you were sent to assist the gardener.



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back part of the house where the plate is sometimes left: if I do it, who will accuse me? Sir Ronald, no, he is safe, this red headed fellow?—There's little fear of that; but one at a time; I do his business for him now, and I mistake if the lout—I shan't forget that in a hurry, won't return him the compliment with interest; why, what if she screams a bit, Johnny can drive the cart, and I can gag her, only these young ones have such sharp voices, and open their mouths so wide, that it requires a truss of straw to choke them. Now, I'll just go home and teach Johnny to drive a bit, for as to work, I've given up that for the next three months. Cold weather in the morning never agreed with me yet, and my wife likes late breakfasts." Thus murmuring to himself, the worst person in the parish walked leisurely home, only occasionally stopping to call some of his old friends by their names, asking them how they liked toiling like dray horses, and shaking his pockets, promised them some beer if they did their work well.

It was not of course unobserved by the



The image displays a highly degraded, high-contrast black and white scan of a document. The content is almost entirely lost to noise and artifacts, appearing as a dense, vertical pattern of black and white speckles and streaks. No legible text or distinct graphical elements are visible.

the tea and toast arguments and remarks, went on much as usual.

"Come, Laura," said Margaret, "you must see how anxious I am to contribute to the happiness of my father; what is your determination; you fixed upon this day yourself, and therefore I have less hesitation in asking you. I am well aware that your modesty would have prevented your speaking, and therefore I began the subject."

Laura for some moments was silent; she did not wish to give her pain from whom she had received so much kindness; but her mind was made up, and delay only made the matter worse, as it rendered her subject to the accusation of duplicity. "I have, Margaret, come to the determination to which I intend to adhere; I have long in silence, and in secrecy, nursed the love I have confessed for Albert, that love would have died a secret, had not Albert's confession of it in the ball-room made it public; he left me under a sacred promise, that nothing but his death should prevent his

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according to your known hospitality, delighted to see him for one night."

"As your friend, my dear Laura, he is most welcome, but he is so wayward a man, that I doubt if he will accept of the invitation."

There was a sneering manner in the expression, a lighting up of the countenance which now blazed with anger, that even Laura, innocent as she was, could not mistake, she burst into tears, and rushing towards Margaret, said, "Forgive me, dear Margaret, for the displeasure I have occasioned you; but it is no easy matter for one so deeply engaged to Albert, to remodel her heart, to rub out all that has rendered so many days of happiness, and to fill the void occasioned by such an event, by to me, almost a stranger."

"A stranger, why he has known you twice the time of Albert."

"Time is time, but love measures not time by its minutes: it flies when with those we love, it lingers long, terribly long, when we are not so disposed."

tears, they make the eyes unbecomingly red; but I forget, as you have no lover to rebuke your appearance, it is indifferent;—pray do not allow the servant for whom I have rung to witness the finale of this scene, remember Mr. Law is most welcome.”

Laura rushed to her room, and there gave vent to her sorrows; there was not one to whom she could communicate her grief; the gaunt severe countenance of Sir Ronald, although it had once relaxed into kindness, was not very inviting for a young lady. Margaret’s manner was enough to rebuke the greatest affection; and Rawlinson she hated; even the lady’s-maid she knew she could not trust; and perhaps there is no moment so truly distressing to the young and the innocent, as when they have a load upon their minds, and can find no kind spirit to share in, or to listen to the tale.

From Laura’s window she overlooked the shrubbery; she saw the servant run with a note to Rawlinson’s house, and she saw the man return with the answer; she felt lighter, the news was communicated, there was nothing



1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the transparency and accountability of the organization. The text outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze data, ensuring that the information is reliable and up-to-date.

2. The second part of the document focuses on the implementation of the proposed changes. It details the steps involved in the rollout process, from initial planning to final execution. The text highlights the challenges faced during the implementation phase and provides strategies to overcome them. It also mentions the role of the staff in ensuring a smooth transition.

3. The third part of the document discusses the future outlook of the organization. It outlines the long-term goals and the strategies to achieve them. The text mentions the need for continuous improvement and the importance of staying updated with the latest trends in the industry. It also mentions the role of the board of directors in overseeing the organization's growth.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the financial performance of the organization. It provides a detailed analysis of the revenue and expenses over the past year. The text mentions the various factors that have contributed to the financial success and the areas that need improvement. It also mentions the role of the finance department in managing the organization's resources.

5. The fifth part of the document discusses the human resources of the organization. It mentions the various initiatives taken to attract and retain talent. The text highlights the importance of employee development and the role of the HR department in ensuring that the organization has the right people in the right places. It also mentions the need for a positive work environment.

6. The sixth part of the document discusses the legal and regulatory aspects of the organization's operations. It mentions the various laws and regulations that the organization is subject to and the steps taken to ensure compliance. The text highlights the importance of legal counsel in navigating the complex regulatory landscape. It also mentions the role of the legal department in protecting the organization's interests.

7. The seventh part of the document discusses the environmental and social aspects of the organization's operations. It mentions the various initiatives taken to reduce the organization's carbon footprint and improve its social impact. The text highlights the importance of sustainability and the role of the organization in promoting a better world. It also mentions the need for transparency in reporting on these aspects.

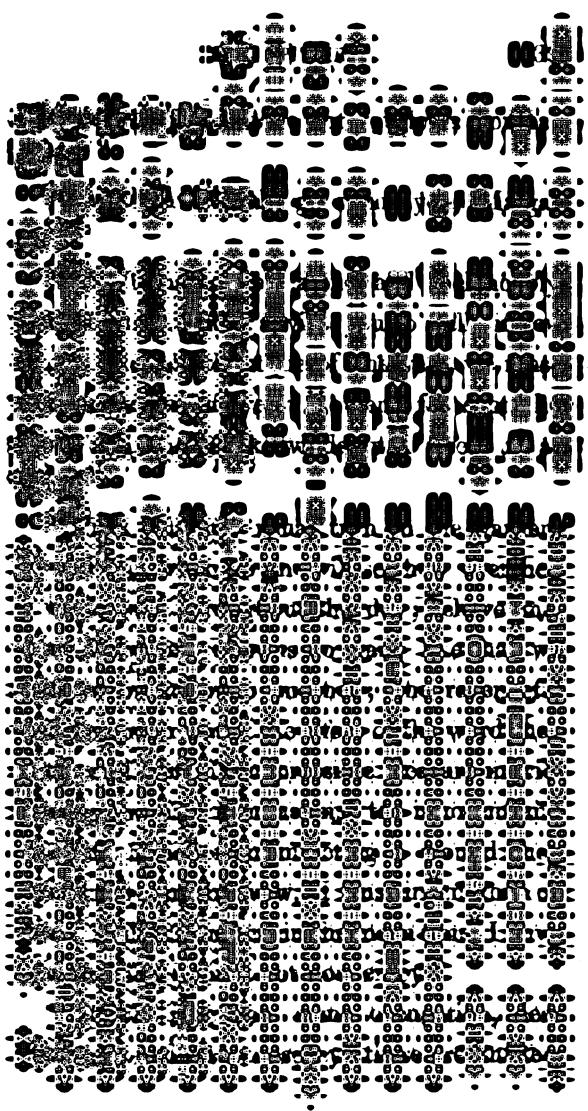
8. The eighth part of the document discusses the overall conclusion of the report. It summarizes the key findings and the recommendations made. The text mentions the need for continued effort and the role of the organization in achieving its vision. It also mentions the importance of stakeholder engagement and the role of the organization in building a strong relationship with them.

for Laura, but excused her determination on the score of his age.

“ It is now over, dear Laura ; you will feel yourself relieved from the conscientious discharge of your duty, and my father will seek elsewhere a companion, now he can no longer hope to share his life with you. Come, child, dry your tears, you are a good girl to weep at the pain you unconsciously give another, and I love you more since I have seen how firm you are, when placed in so trying a situation ; the fresh air will revive us both, shall we ride to-day ? ”

The sudden change in Lady de Lancy's countenance, as she asked the question, the strict caution, nay injunction, of Sir Ronald, alarmed Laura ; and she refused upon the plea that her head ached most violently, and that the motion of the horse would render it worse.

“ As you like,” said Lady de Lancy. “ My dear, I feel always better for a rapid ride, when I am low spirited ; there is nothing exhilarates so much as the quick pace ; I shall ride and



flowers left in the garden, but yet towards the little gate there are some. That warm corner always supplies us, when the pride of the parterre is flown.

“ I will bring you the best the garden affords, be assured ; now good bye, do not lose the fine part of the day in talking to me ; there is a large cloud gathering and you will have some rain.”

Laura was alone ; she now weighed the apparently frivolous conversation of Margaret. Throughout she saw one drift, to get her out of the house, if even for a walk ; whilst the words of Sir Ronald evidently uttered to warn her of some danger, were imperative as to her remaining close at home ; and yet, argued the innocent girl, what danger can await me in the premises of the magistrate ; he who can, by one dash of his pen avert impending danger, and who if aware of such danger, is ever the first to guard against it. It must have been meant as a caution to me, not to throw myself in the way of Rawlinson, who might insult me by a repetition of his offer, even after so posi-

busied herself in taking a list of the articles with the descriptions of them, and then for the first time, she became aware of the large fortune she possessed, and the delicacy of Albert in thus placing within her reach a sufficiency, an elegant sufficiency in the event of his death. At last even the female love of looking at trinkets, of handling ornaments and at gazing at one's own face, (the last lasts the longest,) ceased; the box was carefully enveloped in thick paper, and it was directed to Mr. Law's house—or chambers—in Chancery Lane.

The weather was still fine, the nosegay promised, and Laura the pretty innocent Laura was soon equipped ready for her walk; she gave a last look at the glass—what female heart can resist this innocent gratification? and with a sigh, occasioned perhaps by the recollections of him who had so generously shielded her against poverty, she descended the stairs and walked to the garden. As she passed, she saw Blackburn dressed like a gardener—for gardeners have uniforms—was busily employed in turning

over some ground ; she was for some time close to him before he spoke, he then addressed her with great civility and respect saying, that there were some flowers further down, whilst those which she was now gathering were nearly faded, those beyond were in their best bloom. " I'll show you where they are," he continued, and walking onwards he led the way towards the little gate, which opened not far from Rawlinson's house ; Laura well knew that through that gate Rawlinson passed and repassed, and she was apprehensive that her ill luck might throw her in his way, and subject her to some very unpleasant conversation ; Blackburn stopped to dig up a weed and Laura passed him.

" Now I have her," said the cool villain to himself, " and yet how to open that cursed gate to force her through ? all is ready outside, it is but one effort, and in a moment she would be safe." Such were the first ideas of the villain, but the possession of the key led him to hope that he might, in the first place, possess himself of the jewels, which had often been the subject of conversation in the village. The

Jew's visit had been babbled in the servant's hall, and all things done in a castle, or all things done in a country village, serve by the excitement they give, to dissipate the horrid monotony of such human banishments; hence old tattlers and retailers of gossip and scandal congregate in villages, or exist in country towns.

Laura was in the act of gathering the flowers when the unhesitating villain got close to her, he had wound up his resolution to the deed, and was on the point of advancing when Sir Ronald's deep voice, was heard calling upon Blackburn; he startled, so did Laura. "Go to your work, Sir," said the Baronet, fixing upon him an intelligent eye; the ruffian seemed awed by the unusual tone of his master; whilst Sir Ronald advanced and assisting Laura to collect her flowers, walked with her back to the house; as she entered, he said: "The weather is getting too cold for one of your delicacy, you have not followed my injunctions or advice in all things."

CHAPTER III.

THAT day passed off, the dinner was dull and heavy, but afterwards Laura was agreeably surprised to find Sir Ronald did not retire as usual to his room, and to his classical researches. He was disposed to join in the conversation, and when relaxing into his habitual apathy, or rather burying himself in his own thoughts, he asked for some music to cheer him up, and Laura ran hastily to the window, near which the piano was placed, in the moonlight, she saw two men, who seemed cautious to avoid discovery, by hiding themselves, as the light appeared at the window. It was not yet winter enough to shut out the stars and the moon, nor bleak enough to close the rooms for the season.

Laura sung delightfully, not in that miserable manner we sometimes see, when the countenance is distorted, the mouth forced wide open, and the breath pumped up with difficulty—painful to the victim, disgusting to the listener. Her pure voice came as from a flute; there was no effort, no straining after effect, the close and accurate shake was as clear and as marked as the note of the thrush; and unconsciously she went from song to song. Sir Ronald left his chair, and walked to the piano; but Laura remarked, that although he was apparently attentive to her song, that his eyes wandered from her to the window, until at last he took up his position there, apparently gazing at the stars, astronomy being with him a favourite science.

“How still and beautiful every thing looks,” said Laura, as she rose from the piano, and stood by the side of the man, who within a few hours had grown a great favorite with the lovely girl.

“All is still as death,” said Sir Ronald, “and man sleeps, whilst the watchful eye in

those thousand stars are awake and beaming; that beautiful harmony cannot be the result of chance. An astronomer sees in the arrangement of the firmament above as much uniformity of design, as the surgeon discovers in the anatomy of the human being; and if from the lowest animal, which creeps through its existence, or the wide spreading wings of the eagle, up to the master piece in man, we trace the same wisdom, the same wonderful design, the same harmony, that the astronomer remarks in the wonderful arrangements of omnipotence; who can doubt the unerring wisdom of that great, that wonderful architect? Yet man, he at least, who contributes to all the wants of man, borne down by his daily toil; gladly wraps himself in the warm blankets, and sleeps unconscious of the glory, the sublimity of night, whilst those whose minds might revel in the luxury of its knowledge, lose their existence in the frivolous amusements of crowded rooms, and waste their breath in the degrading conversation of fashion and its follies. It is melancholy to think,

that now, whilst the deepest knowledge could be gleaned from that living book, all men sleep!"

"Not all," said Laura with a smile, as she interrupted the baronet, in one of his many moral moments, "for I saw two men just now, pass from that walk into the other."

"Hah!" ejaculated Sir Ronald, his eyes rivetted to the last indicated spot, and at that moment he saw, or thought he saw, what Laura had remarked.

"Upon my word," said Lady de Lancy, as she advanced to the window, "these moonlight murmurs, and the morning tête-à-tête, seem wonderfully to have drawn you together. Laura, I shall be jealous of you, if Sir Ronald explains the stars to you by night, and in the morning devotes his time and attentions to you; come from the window, I see nothing so very unusual in a bright evening, or moon-lit night. Laura, another song; that sweet voice of yours, gave me a delightful musing, which, having died with the sound that awakened it to life, leaves me ten times more sad than heretofore, as, to borrow one of Sir Ronald's

wise remarks, the lightning brightens for a second, and then leaves the wonder-stricken mortal in more profound darkness. Come, come, stars will shine another night, and we can study them alone; music, Laura, music! it's rarely we have heard you, and now on the eve of your departure, you make us regret the loss, even in anticipation."

"Sing, Laura," said Sir Ronald, keeping his eyes fixed upon the spot, "sing!"

Laura complied, whilst Margaret, taking her husband's hand, and with an impressive look, endeavoured to draw him from the window.

"It shall not be, I say," said Sir Ronald aloud, as he advanced and rang the bell; "in my house the simplest servant shall be protected; and shall my visitor be subjected to insult? I see the drift, Margaret, of all this, and thank those stars for the kind light they have shed upon this subject."

The servant came, Sir Ronald whispered, and the man withdrew, whilst the unconscious Laura kept warbling to the most inattentive audience; the time crept on, and the general

hour of retiring to bed had passed, before Lady de Lancy hinted the hour, and complained of the sleepiness which her ride had occasioned. She kissed her guest warmly, apparently sincerely, and after thanking Laura for her kindness they separated.

Laura was no sooner in her own chamber than she knelt down, as was her custom, and fervently prayed for the protection of that great power, who watches over the innocent, and guards the weak and defenceless, by the powerful shield of his omnipotence. It was perhaps the happiest hour of her existence, when she knelt in the seclusion of her own chamber, and there rendered thanks for all the blessings bestowed upon her ; her devotion was disturbed by a slight tap at her door, and Lady de Lancy in her dressing gown entered ; this unexpected, unusual visit alarmed Laura, who instantly summoned all her courage to meet the conversation.

“ I cannot sleep, dear Laura, and yet I felt fatigued ; my father had for the first time these two years, excepting when away from his re-

sidence, missed his evening visit, and I can fancy how lonely, how desponding he must be, in the solitude of his own house. I cannot ask you to alter your determination, for I saw how much happier you became, when you announced this morning that resolution to which you had come, and I, like a bad spirit, uneasy in my own abode, am come to pester my best friend with my uneasiness." Laura was silent, she seemed at any rate to have profited by the remark of Sir Ronald, that when people were inclined to speak, listen.

" You are silent, Laura, silent and reserved, I cannot tell the reason ; you cannot wonder that a girl should forward the views of her father, or aid him in his endeavours to find a companion, some more worldly minded would thwart him ; for at his death, his large fortune must descend to me ; but I am not one of those who find a pleasure in the increase of wealth. Here it is useless, I could not spend it, I would rather give some to portion a girl, whose husband he is to become, and lose all

prospects in the future, than see him miserable in his solitude."

"It will be but a few days, and I shall relieve you, my dear Margaret, of the unfortunate beauty which has attracted his notice; pray do not make me miserable by forcing all of this day again upon my mind."

"I see you are already making preparations for departure; this case addressed to Mr. Law, seems the jewel case; take care of it, for it is valuable; but I fear it has been acquired in a manner not strictly consonant with honor."

"Good night," said Laura, interrupting her, "good night." She locked her door as Lady de Lancy withdrew, and feeling overpowered by the remark she opened her window, a sudden breeze extinguished the light, and with the exception of the moon's beams, the unhappy girl was in darkness. She preferred undressing in the dark, to the chance of a further conversation with Lady de Lancy. It was a beautiful night; scarcely an autumnal leaf in premature death, fell from the trees; all was cal-

culated to lead the mind into serious thoughts, and to one already melancholy, night had its charms, which darkness enhanced. She wrapped herself closely up, and kneeling at the window, she began again her prayers. Laura was not a girl who prayed because she had been made to pray, and custom established the dull routine over which many fall asleep; her prayers arose from a heart deeply impressed with the necessity of calling upon Him, who is the father of the fatherless, and the words came forth, slowly, solemnly, sincerely, unlike those who huddle into their beds, and devote one minute out of twenty four hours to repeat a few words which were made familiar to them in the nursery, and at the close of which, the word Amen becomes a part of the sentence, uttered with such rapidity, that no stop intervenes; unlike those, Laura shaped her prayer to her wants. The words rose spontaneously from the heart; she was a religious girl. Her prayers were finished without interruption, and she sat a little distance from the window, to avoid the cold air,

when suddenly she heard the whispering voice of a man beneath the casement ; she listened, she heard it was the voice of Rawlinson, and she could not mistake the other, it was that of Sir Ronald de Lancy.

“ I tell you,” the first said, “ her fortune is immense ; far beyond ours or her best expectations ; you have gained yours by an act doubly culpable, and now you will not let me grasp the object by which that fortune must come.”

“ Not in my house I swear ! if I roll a corpse upon the staircase, and lie dead upon my father’s couch, no one shall harm her here. The lowest Arab, who takes a stranger beneath his miserable roof, is responsible, by the common law of hospitality, for his welfare, and his security. I may be a bad christian, but I will not be worse than a dirty Arab of a desert.”

“ For God’s sake, finish these allusions, we are arranging about my fortune, and you talk about Arabs and deserts ; she must be mine, and you must aid me.”

“ Your’s she may be certainly with her con-

sent, and I should not interpose to prevent it, but in my house—”

“ *Your house !*” interrupted Rawlinson, whose violent temper was in the ascendant ; “ *Your house !—your fortune !* I could strip the peacock of its gaudy feathers, and leave the carcass of the jack-daw upon the lawn. Beware !—”

“ Who is that ?” said Sir Ronald.

Laura crept to the window, and she saw a third party with a long ladder.

“ To your bed, Blackburn,” said Sir Ronald, “ I swear that if this attempt is further followed I will lay you a corpse at my feet ; go, this instant go, or—the cock of a pistol was heard, this is your last moment.”

Blackburn had got much too good a situation to lose it, and its comforts, all at once ; he very quietly, in spite of Rawlinson’s signs, placed the ladder on the ground, and said, “ Don’t be desperate, that’s a gemman,” and walked off.

“ What would the world say, Rawlinson, if such a deed were done in my house ? think better of

it ; your precipitation would hurry the impending ruin, for I feel that sooner or later this false tenure"—here the voice died in the distance, and the rest of the sentence was inaudible.

"What can this mean?" said Laura, as she gently closed the window, and cautiously fastened the shutters. "I must be the object—and, those fatal jewels, the attraction; could Margaret have known this and by way of apprizing me of my danger, opened the window?—My mind misgives me; she could not do it to facilitate her father's object, it is impossible; and how could this plan be executed? perhaps to enter my window, and then to save the scandal which would kill me, force a marriage! I will not believe that one of our sex could ever assist a man to such a diabolical consummation."

There was no sleep to induce those beautiful dreams, which make the awakement to life a pain; there was no silent, slight, still slumber in which the object of a daily thought stands and converses with us in plain reality, when the sentiments of the heart are lavished on him

we adore, and dreams of love and pleasure weaken us into lassitude; no, as her eyes closed and the mind was but half-absorbed in sleep, the window would open in imagination and the scared girl with a beating heart, and quickened pulse, would start almost from her bed with scarcely time to check the screams upon her tongue;—again the influence of fatigue would weigh down her eye lids;—the door opens—the figure of Blackburn with a nosegay would enter, and the frightened girl in cold perspiration, startles again to life. She could not divest herself of the idea that she heard the measured step of Sir Ronald guarding her, and once, so evident was the sound, that she felt secure for a time. The long hours seemed ten times longer, and the first dawn was hailed with all the delight of those who pay their early adorations to the living object of Omnipotence, and bow before the sun; then indeed came security, and then that soft refreshing sleep which obliterates misery, and leaves the few hours of its power a lapse of life—a total oblivion in which not one thought,

not one supposed action could be traced. Who is there, who enjoys sound health who can say he *lives* the allotted period of his existence, six hours of every twenty four? A fourth of life must be subtracted; we may reach seventy years of existence, but we actually live but fifty two or fifty three years.

“What cannot wine perform?” says Horace. Rawlinson had become desperate over his bottle, he had formed his determination; he linked himself with a rogue, and he was determined to gain his end; he knew that sooner or later, as Sir Ronald said “something would come to light concerning the will.” He saw that Sir Ronald sincerely repented the rash act to which he had consented, and that although the hand of fellowship in all its best sincerity, might be held out by one brother to another, that he, hated, despised by Albert, could not hope to be spared; he was now planning the desperate scheme of providing sufficient funds for his maintenance, and of retiring to America. His first object was Laura! with her consent he knew he could not succeed. The man once

dipped in crime has seldom any aversion to dive deeper ; the first plunge is the serious one ; man gets accustomed to evil as infants may be taught to swallow olives. The practised duellist faces his adversary with more coolness than the novice although the novice be the braver man ; custom makes even crime familiar, until a crowning murder finishes the career, and the gallows becomes the record of the ill spent life.

To obtain Laura any how, was a sure fortune. Rawlinson always had on his lips—money *de jure marito* ; he must be married, and of that, if his first scheme succeeded he was certain ; to forward that scheme, he sacrificed every consideration, and his daughter aided and abetted in the act.

Another day had passed, the next would bring Law's answer ; 'in those days the mails were slow to forward communications ; no railroad speed was known ; no delivery of letters in five hours, at the distance of one hundred miles, ever entered the imagination as likely to occur. People made wills, when they

travelled so great a distance, and the rumble of a carriage was as rare as the rumble of an earthquake.

Rawlinson knew the full value of time, and was one of those men who availed himself of every opportunity; his watchful eye never slumbered when his point might be lost by any inattention, and now his worthy coadjutor, Blackburn, whose covered cart stood hard by with Johnny as the driver, was at his new employment, although he had been desired by Sir Ronald to give up the spade, and leave his situation in the shrubbery. Rawlinson had superseded the order; crime levels all distinction—all authority; the early part of the day was passed without a chance of success, but about two o'clock, a gleam of hope appeared, and Laura was seen carefully sauntering down the shrubbery; Blackburn instantly concealed himself; she passed, humming a tune and twisting a thread round some of the fading beauties of the garden. She appeared lost in a profound reverie, and heedless of where she walked.

Far otherwise was the watchful Blackburn ; his eyes were ever on her, whilst his body was concealed by some trees, behind one of which he slipped as she advanced. His pulse beat high. She was walking to her ruin, as incautiously as innocence ever walks before suspicion alarms her ; he trod as lightly as a zephyr ; he unfolded from under his green apron, a shawl, which he held wrapped round his left arm, and with his right extended to keep his balance even, he trod as circumspectly as a rope dancer.

Laura advanced to the warm corner, whilst Blackburn, stealing between the trees, opened the door which led upon the road ; he returned, creeping cautiously to within a few paces of her ; he waited with admirable patience, until the unconscious girl stooped down to select some flowers ; he stepped nimbly, but stealthily towards her, threw the shawl over her head, and fastening his arms round her waist, keeping the shawl firmly over her, caught her up in his powerful grasp, and carried, in spite of her fruitless exertions to liberate herself, and her half-stifled screams for assistance,

the struggling Laura to the cart. He never spoke, but placed her concealed from any person, with his hand tight over her mouth, whilst the young fry of treachery, whipped the willing horse, and the cart was quickly conveyed through the village. On gaining the other side, the hand was relaxed, and the faint effort of Laura, to cry for assistance, relapsed into silence. Then came all the misery that a vivid imagination pourtrays to a distressed mind; she at once comprehended the conversation she had overheard, and the warning voice of Sir Ronald; how he could be acquainted with such an idea, and not at once take more efficient means to repress the assault, never occurred to her. She saw in all he had done the action of a friend, but by whom she was entrapped she could not tell; it could not be Rawlinson, that she was assured, but that she was a prisoner from his plan, and his desire she could not doubt. The wheels seem to turn rapidly round, and each moment, as it were, estranged her from Raven Castle, and cast an additional gloom upon her mind, she could

not move, for once or twice she had endeavoured to rise, meaning to regain her liberty, but the strong hand of him who was guilty of abduction, held her down ; he used no more violence than was requisite on such an occasion, and throughout the whole journey not a word was spoken. At last she felt the cart turn off the high road, the quick trot subsided into a slow walk, whilst the cart, as it vibrated from side to side, bore witness from the jolting, that the road was not much frequented by any but carts, the ruts were deep, or the ground naturally uneven. Her destiny was soon to be known, each minute now appeared an age, as each effort of the almost wearied animal conveyed her beyond the reach and the sight of friends. She now began to think of the value of her jewels, and the means of converting those to her safety ; she spoke clearly, but not loudly, and she offered her abductor any sum to restore her to Raven Castle.

“ Any sum,” said Blackburn, who now felt himself in security “ is no sum ; when we deal for money, we always know the weight.”

“ Will one hundred pounds bribe you to do a just act ?”

“ Aye, Miss, that it would ; but don’t you see, a hundred guineas are not carried in every lady’s pockets, so I presume you have not got that about you.”

“ No, I have not,” said Laura, “ but I have that at Raven Castle, which will procure more than ten times the sum.”

“ That’s a sight of money. Johnny, my boy, you go to school and get flogged for those crooked figures you make on the slate, how much will ten times a hundred guineas make ?”

“ That’s more figures than ever I made yet,” replied the boy.

“ It will make a thousand guineas,” said Laura, “ and I will give you one hundred of them to-morrow, if you will return me to where you took me from.”

“ Aye, Miss, and then the magistrate and the goaler will come, and you’ll kiss the book, and tell the truth, and I, honest Joe Blackburn, will have to go to prison.”

“ By the most sacred oath that ever fell from the lips of human creatures, I never will mention your name, or this circumstance to any one. I will return to the house, feign some excuse for my long absence, give you the money, and pray that you may be forgiven the sins you may have committed.”

“ Let’s look at your face, for you speak like a parson.” He took the shawl from her head, and Laura raised herself up.

“ Gently, gently, my little lady,” replied Blackburn, “ your eyes won’t serve you much here, for if you were put down now, without you followed the track of the wheel, which by to-morrow will be lost, you never would find your way back, so look at me full in the face and tell me all about these guineas.”

Laura, with much earnestness, related what she had before said ; “ Think,” she added, “ what you would feel, if your only daughter was thus torn from you ; if she you loved were in an instant snatched from your sight, perhaps never again to see you ; in spite of the committal of the deed, you are a man, a hus-

band, a father, and the appeal of innocence must reach your heart."

"There, Miss, you may cut short that fine speech ; I've no more heart than a turnip, and I'm just about as cool, so do you see all the business about father, mother, and son, is so much waste of words. Stop, Johnny, a bit, you are jolting the lady into a jelly, and before she melts away, we may as well see what we can make of this matter," the cart stopped. "There now, Miss, take breath, for its rough work for that tender build of yours. I've often wondered you don't drop in halves, you're so precious thin about the ribs. Now as I told you, don't think to gammon me about long words and such like, but do you hear, talk about those guineas, you have not got them in the house, have you?"

"No," said Laura, but she added, suddenly recollecting herself, "I have fifty pounds in money there, and you shall have that two minutes after you arrive."

"If I was only sure of that, and the other half to come next day, we might do a little

business here, and take from both. Ah," said he, "as the thought occurred to him, "I am to get twenty guineas when you are lodged safely, and you are not far off, so that I must take you there first, and make you over, as we do a keg of run spirits."

"To whom? for God's sake tell me to whom?"

"Why to an old woman, who can't eat you."

Laura felt a sudden hope, her own sex would not desert her; and she had spirit enough to face any woman, and fight for her liberty.

"A woman," she said, "what can be the object of this?"

"I dare say now, that you'd like a man better," continued the ruffian, not heeding the blush which coloured the poor girl's face; well that's natural, and you shall have a man to take care of you this evening. I'm sorry I'm obliged to leave you, but I've a little business in hand near the cliff, just about where the Baronet pushed old Herbert over, and left him

hanging, like the tail of a boy's kite to a tree." Laura's heart sunk within her; if her own safety had not been uppermost, what would she not have done to have pursued her inquiries concerning that affair.

"For heaven's sake," she said, preferring even Blackburn's company to that of some stranger, "do not leave me, do not leave one so young, so helpless, at such a minute."

"Why, Johnny my boy, bless my heart if I don't think she's in love with me; don't you hear how she asks me to stay with her, why she won't leave me. Bless your pretty little mouth, I could kiss it until to-morrow morning; don't look so shamed about it, why its nothing; put down your claws, or I'll soon let you know who's master now." The struggle was short, and Blackburn kissed her; "Now about this money, I've no time to waste; here's a bargain for you; I shall take you to the cottage, I shall take the twenty guineas from your man, Rawlinson; there don't shiver and shake, like a boy going to school on a frosty morning, and keep your teeth quiet, they make

as much noise as a watchman's rattle in London ; well, I shall leave you with him."

" For God's sake," said Laura, kneeling before him, " if ever any words of innocence could move your heart, do not leave me ?"

" I never knew a woman fall so desperate in love in my life ; I wonder you ain't ashamed of yourself ; I shall leave you, but I'll go back and tell the Baronet where you are ; he'll come fast enough, and then you'll be rescued, and to-morrow—you know—the money ; a hundred guineas, and not a word said against honest Joe Blackburn."

" And is it for twenty guineas, this is to happen ? Listen, good man ;" and Laura put her delicate hand upon the ruffian's sleeve, " for every guinea that man is to give you, I will give you five to restore me safe, and uninjured. —now—"

" No !" said Blackburn, after due consideration ; " no, that's impossible, it can't be. I am an honourable man, and amongst us, as does business without an act of parliament, honour is honour, and no mistake. I have pledged my

honour to place you in his hands, and here's some of the guineas I received for it; I could not do it, not I; I teach my son John never to break his honour with any of us, and he'd just as soon bite his tongue off and give it to the dog to eat, as say a word about this; why if he told a lie, do you think one of us would not turn him out of the gang, as a disgrace to the whole body of us?—certain, sure, we should; and what's more, never speak to him again, as long as he lived."

"Is there any thing in the whole world, I can offer you to save me from that man?—If you will trust me, I will give you enough to place you in independence, to save you all the labour of your life; to make your son an honest man, and to redeem yourself."

"There now, I've done with you; drive on Johnny, gently my boy. You're just like that fat parson of our's, who promises us all manner of good things when we are dead, and can't claim them; if you had stuck at the first thing, there was a chance, but to talk about all that nonsense, I can't believe you, and like the rest

of you women, you see, you can't get into a fright, without telling a lie."

"Stop, boy, stop!" said the almost frantic girl; "stop, and hear me; implore your father to hear me again. Pray, Sir, do not leave me here; take me back, and God will reward you!"

"I thought as much," said the villain; "always long credits; exactly what the parson says; go on, Johnny, and don't stop without I tell you; there's the cottage, go to the back way."

"Mercy! mercy! mercy!" said Laura, "if you are dead to that call, may He above, be dead to your's hereafter."

"Hereafter! how far is that off?—next winter?"

"Soon, too soon it will come, and when you are on your death-bed, and each moment hurrying you to eternity, whilst your memory runs over the many crimes which have branded your guilt, then shall the mercy you deny to the innocent—the defenceless, give you no hope of forgiveness—no prospect of heaven."

"Johnny, do you hear, how precious mad she's got; she's talking about dying in our *beds*; why we never bargained for that; and then about mercy, and heaven, and forgiveness—"

"My eye, father!" said the boy, with a particular knowing look; "we wants a dictionary to look out these words; I never heard one of them ever since I left school, and became an honest boy. Through this gate?"

"Yes, right on to the yard. Now before we get out, Miss, if you can talk sense, let us have a little of it; that goes a great way—do you stand to your bargain about the one hundred guineas?"

"I do, I do, and I pray you take the other offer—release me now—I will crawl back to the house—the secret shall be kept, and double the sum paid to-morrow."

"We are all agreed about the first, so that's a do; give us your hand upon it; as for the other part, if it was not for my honour, I'd borrow a fresh horse and drive you back like a lady."

“ When will he come ? ”

“ I dare say it won't be long, first ; he's very fond of you ; I fancy I see him rubbing his hands, and twisting his fingers in his car-rotty hair. Don't say a word about the kiss.”

“ How long will it be before Sir Ronald can arrive ? ”

“ What's the hour ? ”

Laura looked at her watch—it was nearly four.

“ I dare say he'll be here about eight, or nine, or perhaps if the night's cold, he might come to-morrow morning. Now, then, give me your hand, and do you hear, the less you say the better.” The unresisting Laura stepped from the cart, and was conveyed into the house.

CHAPTER IV.

RAWLINSON soon learnt the abduction of Laura, and knowing very well the cottage to which she had been forcibly removed he soon prepared to follow. Now was his only time—he felt that his extravagance would finish in a direct denial of Sir Ronald to advance him more; for although the Baronet most sincerely repented the misdeeds of former days, yet he was prudent enough to save money for the day which might come. Frequently he had upbraided Rawlinson with his extravagance, and words had so often been exchanged between them of a hostile nature that each began to fear the tongue more than the hand of his adversary. Rawlinson knew no God but money,

and now he had it nearly within his grasp ; he had prepared one of those drunken companions whose names do for witnesses as well as the more trustworthy of society, to accompany him and his bride into Scotland ; there it would require but little ceremony to unite Laura to her persecutor. With almost drunken hope, Rawlinson left his house, taking with him a sufficiency of dress to last for a week.

In the mean time, the forlorn and miserable Laura was seated in a small room, with Blackburn for her only companion ; John had been sent to apprise Rawlinson of the success of the scheme, and the old woman, who once had ventured to lend the poor Laura some assistance, was sent to her own cottage, with a mighty curse from Blackburn, to keep her warm in her solitude.

“ You see, girl,” said Blackburn, to Laura, “ that in this world we are never safe ; it was but a few minutes ago, and you were walking in the garden ; by to-morrow, perhaps you will be far away from here.”

The affrighted girl startled at the idea, and asked "what he meant?"

"Why he is a curious man, and I am not answerable for what he does; I heard him say something about Scotland, and then returning here for a month, or so; but I'll do my best to speak to Sir Ronald, and if he *chooses*, he can always help it."

"Chooses!" said Laura, "can you doubt his willingness to assist me?"

"He may be willing enough to assist you, but you see, Miss, I am not so sure, if he dare do it."

"What do you mean?"

The loquacious Blackburn, who when with men was the very personification of discretion, was rather off his guard with a young lady, and spoke at random. "Why you see," he continued, "they are a pair of them: the son's a good son and does as the father wishes him; and the father's the best man alive for a trick; so now you understand me: then there's the lady—why she opened your shutters for me to get in the

other night, so I'm thinking, that between the three, with myself as an assistant, you are in a nice mess."

It was quite in vain Laura again and again implored her only companion to assist her in her flight—he was silent;—she made a desperate attempt to escape by the door, but in an instant she found the arm of Blackburn round her waist, herself lifted like a feather off her legs, and conveyed to the further end of the room; he merely said :

"Not so fast, my pretty bird—honour, is honour; you may get away after I have let you, if you can, but as I told you, I'm bound to deliver you safely into his hands, and so I will."

"Hear me," said the girl, as she threw herself on her knees before Blackburn, "hear me, and have mercy upon me. I am engaged to be married to Albert de Lancy," Blackburn startled, and took hold of her hands, "he is to be my husband—the man all the village respects and loves. I am a poor destitute orphan, there is no hand to rescue me, no ear to hear my prayer, but His, (she pointed upwards,) and

yours), the eye of Him is over us, He sees us now. If you are a man, as you say you are, rise up my friend, and save me ; Albert shall repay you a thousand fold, I will repay you more, much more than I promised ; and He who is the Father of the fatherless, will bless and reward you hereafter."

Shocked by the force of the appeal, Blackburn looked at her with an eye of compassion, and endeavoured to raise her from the kneeling position. " No," she said, " here must I remain, and you, an Englishman, will remember, that an unprotected girl knelt to you, as to a God ; implored your protection, and you refused it. Think, if your own daughter was taken from you by force, secreted in a miserable hovel, until the man she most hated came to use her with violence, to force her to be his wife, perhaps worse, how would you resent such injury, feeling as, and being, a man."

" I would wring the rascal's neck as easily as I would dispose of a barn door fowl ?"

" Then be a man now. Now before it is too late, before he comes. I am stronger than you

think, no difficulty, no danger can daunt me. Come, and He above will reward you."

"If I could give him back his five pounds, and not hear the echo of my own voice, I would do it ; but there is honour amongst us."

"Honour, Blackburn ! can there be honour in doing that which the heart tells you is wrong ? Oh mercy, mercy ! Great God, instruct me to shape my words, that he may hear me, and vouchsafe my prayer ! I implore you by your parents, who reared you, and who now sleep in death ;—by your own wife, your child, your own conscience, shield me, protect me, take me from this cursed house, or leave me to myself, and let me escape. Why there is a tear standing in your eye, before it runs down as the record of this crime, save me !" She sprang upon her feet, she felt she was not detained, she rushed to the door, it was but one bound more, and she reached the outer one—it was locked, and Blackburn had the key ; she called him, she implored him, and as she returned once more to follow up her suc-

cess, she saw Rawlinson approaching; it was too late, the change from hope to sudden despair overcame her, she gave a loud shriek, and fell motionless on the floor.

It was long ere she awoke : she was in bed, and by her side was the old woman, who had busily employed herself in rubbing her forehead with cold water ; on the first motion of returning life and sense, words soon followed ; the unhappy girl implored one of her own sex to assist her, and was refused, not from any unwillingness to do so good an act, but from the position of Rawlinson and his threats ; he had sworn to murder the old woman if she attempted such an act, and had placed, in the most ingenious manner, the wire of a bell to the door, so that every attempt at an escape would be a signal to the ruffian of the intention ; besides which, he was at that moment posting up and down, like a sentinel before the door.

Laura, on hearing his footsteps, placed her hand in an imploring attitude, and, with streaming eyes, looked at the old woman ;

that she was answered in the affirmative was evident from the old creature taking her apron, and wiping away a tear from her old, and already dimmed eyes.

Those who meditate crime are ever watchful; Rawlinson had heard the voice, and opened the door; he did not disguise his intentions, he spoke out.

"Laura," he began, "your conduct is shameful, but once more I am ready to forgive you; few husbands would have borne this insult, and not have visited it strongly against the offender; but I forgive you; nay, do not attempt to speak in vindication of your behaviour, even this poor old woman is a witness that you, my wife, left my home with a vile labourer, a common fellow, and a felon, and carefully concealing yourself in a covered cart, came to her house."

"Believe him not, good woman," gasped Laura, "I am not his wife, as heaven is my witness, never, never!"

"Shameful, shameful creature," ejaculated Rawlinson, with a mockery of feeling wonder-

fully imitated ; “ hear her, old woman, she denies being my wife, and see the record of her lie upon her finger ; here is our marriage ring.”

“ Away,” said Laura, as she tore her hand from Rawlinson’s grasp, and taking the ring, which at the first moment the wily attorney had placed on her finger, she threw it from her, “ never was I so disgraced, and never will I be your wife ! There is a just Providence, who will protect the innocent.”

It was evident that the old woman believed Rawlinson’s story. She had seen Laura arrive, she had remarked the agitation of the girl, the anxiety of Blackburn to avoid detection, and his eager manner, when he dispatched his son ; the fainting fit at the discovery of the retreat, the imploring cry for mercy, all rose to confirm in her mind, the guilt of Laura.

“ I can forgive you even this time, Laura, for I love you tenderly, affectionately ; we must lose no longer time here, or the scandal will be abroad ; the carriage is ready, I leave you to dress, but mind, I will not delay.” As he

finished his sentence, he walked leisurely out, he turned to the old woman, and said, " Assist her but do not inquire into that which does not concern you ; whatever expense has been incurred, shall be more than repaid."

The door was closed ere Laura recovered from her astonishment. A thousand wild thoughts had rushed upon her ; she imagined that during her fainting, she might have been married, and ignorant of the extent of the law, she fancied herself torn for ever from Albert ; then memory recalled every word, until she had swooned away ; she saw that the marriage could not have been solemnized. Where was the priest, the book, the witness, for no one had entered the house ? Assuming as much courage as innocence could inspire, she rose and dressed herself, " I call upon you to remember this day, this hour," she said, " write it down, for one day you will be called upon to speak of it."

" Poor lady !" she answered, " how could you do so rash an act, and run away from so kind, so forgiving a husband ?"

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Laura looked at her fully in the face, as she said, "Silence, and dare not insult me so much as to believe him, in preference to me."

Country people will talk ; their tongues are heaven's licences, although the devil may record their sayings. "I never knew, Miss," she laid a peculiar stress upon this word, "a man who was going to be hung, who did not say he was innocent, until the rope was round his neck, then it's too late, and he tells the truth ; I remember when mother Grant's daughter ran away with farmer Hodge's plough boy—"

"Silence ! I say, and respect my feelings if you cannot believe my innocence ! from this house I will not go, but by force ; that wretch, whom I scorn, shall never master me but by strength, and death itself shall be preferable to my being called his wife. Leave me, I say ! for since I cannot get my own sex to credit or assist me, I will trust in the truth of the proverb, that all tyrants are cowards, and I will maintain my virtue and my liberty, by the courage which ever attends innocence and modesty. Leave me."

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"No, no, Miss, I must not leave you, and I cannot if I would; this door is locked outside, those shutters are barred outside, and without the foot of the chimney sweep, heaven preserve the poor forlorn boys! I or you must be content to remain until your husband's return."

"Have I not told you he is not my husband, and do you still discredit me?"

"Your words would make me believe your story; his authority, his boldness, his unreserve, make me, against my will, believe him. What can I do? I'm very old, and am frightened; for heaven's sake, leave my house, although 'tis his for a month, he has paid for it."

- "Old woman, if you are not a greater knave than fool, listen to one whose hair is, not grey with experience, but who has common sense for a guide; if my husband had paid for this cottage for a month, I should have known of it. Is it likely I should have run away from one, to bring my lovers to another of his houses, eh?"

"Well, well," sighed the old woman, "they

say wisdom comes with age, and experience grows with observation; I must be a drone indeed, not to see this, for a woman of your age and beauty would surely know all the plans of an old and love smitten husband. I believe you, and yet if you say the truth, how came you here?"

"He employed that villain Blackburn to tear me away from Sir Ronald de Lancy's castle; he is the father-in-law to the Baronet."

The old woman held her long skinny fingers together, and said, "It's true, the world is coming to an end, the great and the low are vagabonds alike, and we shall be swallowed up by an earthquake."

"Nonsense, woman, is there no way of escape?"

"None whatever!"

"How far are we from Raven Castle?"

"Nine miles at least, and that not counting the half mile from the high road."

"Is there no cottage near?"

"Not within two miles, and that over a

hill, which is only passable by daylight; the path is so narrow, that goats hardly trust themselves in the dark."

" Good God, I shall die even of the exertion of my own heart ; alone, friendless confined—how can I escape this wretch, this demon habited as a man ?"

" Say what I can do, and I'll do it; though he kill me."

" Have you no signal, which in the event of fire, might bring neighbours to your assistance ?"

" None but that the flame would make; and then its a weary way for them to tread; besides they might sleep, for they are all labourers, and retire early to bed, and then the cottage would burn to the ground. But heaven guard my old eyes from such a sight."

" Have you no one you could send to the high-road, there to wait until some one passed; fear not for a reward, my liberation shall ensure you an old age of independence."

" I have no one, no, not a soul; my only

girl returns to-night from her school ; she will go to my cottage, and how can I get there ?”

“ Let me try the door,” said Laura ; she tried it fearlessly, but it was fastened.

“ Who is that ?” said Rawlinson, as he unlocked the door, and entered the apartment. There was no answer, Laura stood before him undaunted, unshaken, her eye the meekest, the bluest, seemed lit up with unusual fire ; and it met the keen glance of the villanous attorney undismayed.

“ A tragedy queen !” said Rawlinson, as he advanced towards her, “ come, come, Madam, leave these heroics, and dwindle into the woman ; are you ready to leave this—directly ?”

“ Instantly, when the man appears with whom I can trust myself ; with you, I will never leave this cottage.”

“ Then I must use the power the law allows a husband ; I must take you by force, you are my wife, and you shall obey me.”

“ Surely, Sir,” said the old woman, “ you

would not use violence against such a slender girl as this."

"Away, you old fool, to your cottage; leave the room."

"Indeed I will do no such thing; here will I stay, and if my voice can make me heard, poor old Margey's throat shall be hoarse with bawling."

"Oh bawl away, old fool, until you are tired; come, I have no time to lose, come Laura," and he seized her by the hand.

"Never!" said the girl, as she resisted his endeavour to drag her by force, "Never, never! Mercy, mercy! help, help!"

It has a fearful sound upon the ear, that shrill shriek of an affrighted woman, and in the stillness of the night, it reaches as far as a trumpet sound. But Rawlinson knew the distance it had to travel, the solitude of the surrounding country, the perfect loneliness of the cottage, and he shrunk not from the purpose he was resolved to execute. Laura was but a child in his powerful arms; and after a few

ineffectual struggles, her strength gradually gave way, and she was carried almost unresistingly in his arms. He caught her up like a doll ; even the shriek had ceased, but as he reached towards the door, he found his purpose thwarted by the old woman ; who having locked the door inside, stood quietly before the threshold.

“ Stand out of my way, you old hag of the devil ; or I’ll murder you on the spot.”

The old woman stood as immoveable as a statue.

“ You seek the violence yourself ;” in an instant the fainting form of Laura was laid upon the bed ; the old woman was roughly seized, the key wrestled from her by force, herself hauled fearfully against the further wall, the door opened, and Laura once more in the arms of her hated adversary. This time there was no resistance, the poor girl lay motionless on his arms, the old woman was senseless in the corner, the desperate prize was gained ; already had he passed the room door, when a knocking

at the outward one arrested him in his progress, with the girl in his arms ; he opened it.

It was Blackburn, he had betrayed the place of refuge to Sir Ronald ; who, with Mr. Law, was in pursuit, and now sinking his treachery, he had returned quick as a horse's speed could convey him to insure the friendship of the very man he had betrayed ; he knew Rawlinson could creep out of any difficulty, and he always liked the imagination which framed the anecdote of having a friend in both places.

“ What can be done, Blackburn ; could we not stand against these fellows, and boldly take the girl away ? ”

“ Impossible, they have more than four to assist them, the postilions would aid them, and so would the grooms, for you are hated by some, and scorned by others. Here there is no retreat, you must cross the foot of the hill to the right ; you must then continue along a narrow path, which will carry you many miles lower down towards the coast ; once there, you know the rest. The signals can be

answered as usual, and we may yet meet together again."

"And you, Blackburn, what will become of you?"

"Never mind me, leave the girl anywhere—escape, and let the carriage you have kept waiting at the very turning wait until the pursuers come." At that moment the cry of some people was heard in the distance. Rawlinson cast a look at the pale face of the girl, and with a speed quickened, in proportion to the danger, he followed the road which Blackburn had described. No sooner was he gone, and the old woman sufficiently recovered to attend to Laura, than Blackburn shouted to the pursuers, and pointed out the cottage, in which the girl was concealed. Sir Ronald was eager in the pursuit, but Law was young and nimble, comparatively speaking. He had arrived at the castle about two minutes after Blackburn's return; his course was instantaneously taken, the carriage was turned about, and money lavished upon the postilion, to urge their already fatigued horses to their

utmost speed. His was a perilous position, but he had extracted a promise of pardon from Law, and Laura had pledged her word, never to whisper against him ; he would be king's evidence, vagabonds are ever ready to sacrifice their friends, when the tide turns against them ; whilst it flows favourably, no one is more constant, more sincere ; but one adversity, or one slip by which the other can rise over the prostrate body of his friend, and farewell friendship. Laura had recovered before the arrival of those who hastened to rescue her ; and that moment was not lost by Blackburn, "For you," he said, I have sacrificed myself, my wife, my children, I must be taken to the goal, tried, condemned, whilst those around me perish from starvation ; I have been the means of rescuing you—I throw myself at your mercy."

"I told you that if you brought me my friends, I would not testify against you. I promised you money, you have saved me, trust to me and my generosity, go instantly and guide Sir Ronald here, for the sooner he is

informed of his father-in-law's baseness, and the sooner I feel myself in security the better. Blackburn was about to speak, but Laura interrupted him, "go, my word is pledged, no harm shall happen to you."

It was not long before Sir Ronald and Mr. Law entered the apartment. Laura, unable to contain her feelings, which she had mastered beyond all conception, now became a woman; she leapt into the arms of Sir Ronald, and gave way to her feelings unchecked, uncontrolled. Law saw this but dimly, for his eyes were full, but his words were at command.

"Come, let us move from this, and quickly. we must return, but not to Raven Castle; for that man, Sir Ronald," pointing to Blackburn, "you are the best protector—I am the best for her."

"Oh let me go back and take one leave of Margaret; one last embrace; my dresses, my jewels are there."

"Just like a woman," said Law, "she talks of dresses and jewels as unconcernedly as a paid lawyer does of his client's case; you

must never enter that house again, at least as yet," he added cautiously, "the jewels are safe with Sir Ronald, the dresses are safe with Lady de Lancy."

"And yet, Mr. Law," said Sir Ronald, with great eagerness of manner, "I think if I could pass one hour with you alone, you would not repent the time. I have much to say, and to you I would unburthen myself. You have already proved yourself the friend of my brother, and of Laura. I can make you a more valuable friend to both."

"Then why did you not say so at first?" answered Mr. Law, "it's quite astonishing what words and time are saved, by coming to the point at once."

"Your consent, Mr. Law, to remain one night as my guest, lightens a heavy load here."

"I fancy I may prove a very unwelcome guest to Lady de Lancy."

"What relieves my mind, ought to relieve hers; my determination is taken, it will save

much time, much expense, much uneasiness."

As the party left the cottage, and bestowed some welcome money upon the old woman, Laura took the arm of Mr. Law, and from the answer of the legal adviser, which sounded like, "I have, and before long, I expect to see him;" there was no doubt that a question, the nearest the heart, had been asked.

It was late when they had arrived; there was no Lady de Lancy to welcome them, she was in the sanctuary of her own chamber, and the doubtful manner she received Laura might have convinced one less warm in her friendship, and more tried in the world, that her appearance boded any thing but pleasure. Laura knelt by her, and hid her head in her lap, giving way to all the generous feelings of the young, and as yet uninjured heart; she grieved, in all sincerity, that her father had taken so rash a step, and even endeavoured to shelter his character, under the all-powerful influence of love. Each word struck deeper

and deeper into the heart of the faithless friend who was now foiled at every point ; she knew that Sir Ronald's conversation with Mr. Law would only be saved by her presence, and yet, the affected sorrow, for her father's rash act, almost forbade her intrusion ; but the moments were precious, the previous determination of Sir Ronald — his late moodiness — his sorrow—his sincere and boldly avowed repentance, made her dread the approach of that hour which now she thought had arrived ; it could be procrastinated by her presence, and forgetting even the kneeling girl, who felt for her friend more than for herself, she rushed from the room, and with the consummate coolness of the practised hypocrite, welcomed Mr. Law as he appeared in the drawing-room.

Laura, who feared to be left alone for a moment, soon swelled the number, and the evening promised to pass off, so that Margaret might see her husband, and instil into him some of her courage, some of her resolution.

That dawn of hope was soon overcast ; Sir

Ronald was reserved and silent, he sat near the fire-place, his head stooping forward, his whole mind perfectly absorbed ; when suddenly he rose, he called on Mr. Law to follow him, but Margaret's voice answered, and taking Mr. Law by the hand, she said, " Pardon me, Mr. Law, I have one word to say to Sir Ronald before you begin your conference."

In vain Sir Ronald looked a disapproval, Lady de Lancy advanced towards him, and taking his arm, she led him, rather than followed his footsteps into his library ; there she relinquished her hold. She turned the key in the door, and withdrew it from the lock, and advancing towards her husband, placed her finger on her lips, and sat by him.

CHAPTER V.

THE Spitfire was at sea, the fate of Carlos was known to her crew, and Snarling had taken the oath which the fear of death had forced from the murderer. The Franciscan friar had passed from the scaffold unquestioned; the law had taken its course without interruption and the presence of a priest of the Inquisition excited no particular attention; Carlos was supposed to have died in the right faith, and so far he was considered as a good and repentant Catholic, or the Inquisition might have deprived the eager populace of a sight which, to some, is as much regarded as a pleasure as a bull fight.

“ We must get out of the straits, Snarling, and strike across the Atlantic. We have no

chance here, the merchant ships of all countries, but our own, are few and the ports are dangerous to enter, the Isle of Pines is more fruitful to us, and our success has ever been the greatest among the islands in that vicinity; we might vary our cruize and go farther south, but I must see England again."

"And what would I give, Sir, to have another dance at Common Hard, to shake a flipper with an old messmate or shipmate, to drink another glass with a friend, or to do a bit of double shuffle and cut with my old girl! I'm afraid to say out loud what I could whisper; no man has grown old in our trade as yet, and strange as it is amongst us all, we never have had a deserter; that oath keeps us as close as a nipper does the messenger to a frigate's cable."

"We can talk over past days, Snarling, now in my cabin; the mate should ever know a part of the intentions of his Captain, and the officer should be a respectable distance from the men; we shall all miss Carlos; for if ever a man had the power of disguising his person,

that was the man ; besides his knowledge of Spanish was invaluable ; there is Juan, who must now and then act his part, but he cannot be trusted out of sight ; and here, Snarling, here we must remain until age and decrepitude force us to resign and live on that wretched island in a cave, with no soul to cheer us, no prospect of a return. I, too, who not willingly entered the service, who chose between life and death, and who never contemplated the sacred obligation until it was imposed upon me !—”

“ Aye, Sir, your's was a hard case, and yet you have made much money.”

“ Of what use is it, Snarling ? I can live here, it is true ; but all the wealth of the world cannot buy my freedom ; besides I feel that the money is not honestly gained, we do it against the law.”

“ I don't see that, Sir, we buy our letters of marque from all governments, and that gives us authority to take all vessels ; we are at war with all the world, and all the world with us ; besides, we never cut throats.”

“ Not now, thank God, and yet we may be forced to defend ourselves against an equal force, who then can say the result ? ”

“ There’s no harm in that ; I’ve heard many a man who was no conjuror, say that self-preservation was the first law of nature ; besides, I don’t see why we are not a little kingdom floating about with our own laws, our own authority for our own acts, and now we can put it in force, for there’s a vessel broad on the bow.”

“ I will not touch her here, Snarling, the sea is too narrow, vessels eternally pass, the sea is alive with men of war, and we might be caught in the act.”

“ She is edging down towards us, I think.”

“ Give me the glass,” said the Captain, “ she is a Smyrna, man,” he continued as he looked at the stranger, “ they always look like men of war, but her upper sails are not square enough ; she would make a glorious prize, but the danger is greater than the profit, for they always go armed against the Algerines, and we

should have what I would avoid, much noise before the capture."

The eyes of all the crew who laid along the deck, and only ventured to peep at the vessel were occasionally directed at the Captain; none dared gainsay his word, it was a law, and although every man fore and aft coveted the prize, none ventured to propose the capture. She passed close and evidently well prepared; the rakish look of the Spitfire had excited suspicions of her character, the tompions were out of her guns and her whole crew were on deck; no notice was taken of her, and as she skimmed past with all her studding sails set, her crew were seen to leave their quarters and retire below.

"That's a lucky fellow," said Snarling; "had we met him outside of the straits, he would have been soon converted into dollars; there he goes, little dreaming how near he was to the universal Shark of the Atlantic."

One or two smiled at the new name of the Spitfire, but the Captain looked at his mate

with a frown, as if to warn him that such remarks might lead to discontent.

The next day saw the Spitfire clear of the straits ; she shaped a course for the Western Islands and in about ten days from her passing Gibraltar, she made the Peak of Pico, she passed between the islands until she came to Corvo, off which, and near Flores she intended to cruize. Both the outward and homeward bound vessels which trade between England and America occasionally make these islands. It is a kind of half-way house which gladdens the eyes of the wearied traveller, inviting him to repose or assuring him of his right road.

It was not the first time that the Spitfire had called at Flores for stock ; here it is cheap and good, and from the island's highest point, the telescope could make out a vessel at least thirty miles distant. From that point there was nothing in sight, and the Captain returned to his vessel, resolved to stand out to sea and heave to, or keep the Spitfire under easy sail, always within sight of the islands ; accordingly

she left the unsafe anchorage of Flores and stood out to sea.

That night the Captain endeavoured to glean from Snarling all his previous history, to make him shake off the old sailor, and become more the officer, and he endeavoured to wean him a little from that affection to the bottle, which had never ceased since Tom first sung a song on the forecastle, or danced the seamen's horn-pipe in the waist, to the miserable scrape of a frigate's fiddler; he had deserted, shipped on board a vessel bound to Port au Prince, had been boarded by the pirate, when a less lenient Captain commanded and chose between death and piracy, the life of the latter. Snarling had entered the profession of pirate without much reluctance; for his opinion was, that die he must, therefore, the longer he put it off the better; he was sure of it, and therefore could well accommodate himself to his fate, without hastening his departure. He took to his new calling with much good temper, and always interfered to save the life of another; his good qualities were many, his bad few, his temper

excellent, his strength enormous, his mind uneducated, his manners unpolished; such was the Captain's associate. They had both talked over the oath, which bound them like galley slaves to the oar, and in spite of various hints given by both parties and also of conversations in which the pleasures of home were vividly pourtrayed, and all the charms of the quiet evening of life drawn, both separated without a word as to how this oath could be absolved, or how it was possible to liberate themselves from that they feared to break, and hated to uphold.

It was night, a light breeze blew from the westward—the Spitfire was under easy sail, keeping that vigilant look out, which those who fear a surprise ever keep; occasionally the night glass swept the horizon, and as the moon gave a greater light, the look out became more on the alert.

The crew had been long without the excitement of a prize, and the fate of Carlos, although merited, weighed heavily upon them. The life and soul of the Spitfire was dead, the most

desperate, and yet the gayest and almost the youngest was no more ; the character of the schooner had been betrayed, and there was a general feeling of insecurity amongst the crew ; one, who was sworn to an oath which he never had mentioned without trembling, had broken it. The news could be circulated through the world—the different names under which she had sailed—the secret repository of the counterfeit papers—her retreat at the Isle of Pines—her general haunts—her description, nay even the names of the crew—colour of each man's hair, and the expression of each man's countenance was noted ; well indeed might Snarling say, that all the world were anxious to see the Atlantic Shark.

It was the fear, hitherto unknown, that made the look outs more vigilant, and the report of a vessel on the lee bow, which was hastily announced, drew every man on deck ; whereas, formerly continued success had made them, in imagination, secure against discovery. Now there was no home but the Spitfire, and she had no safe anchorage even for a moment ;

henceforth, the anchor must be a stranger to the ground, and the land be the mark most to be feared; without indeed all their old haunts should be forsaken, and the Spitfire shift her cruising ground far to the southward of the equator.

The stranger was a brig, apparently a merchant vessel, but the Spitfire was not to be perilled upon an uncertainty—sail was made to keep clear of the land, and to be outside of the stranger at daybreak; whilst every motion was watched with a degree of alarm never experienced before. At dawn, her real character was established beyond a doubt—she was a merchant vessel making a run—she might be armed, but that was of small importance; the Spitfire was instantly in chase, and from her sailing (she never had yet found her equal,) was soon ranging up alongside. The brig hove to—she had no means of defence, and the number of her crew being ascertained, the Captain was ordered to come on board the Spitfire, whilst a boat from the schooner went on board the brig. In this boat was the Captain, he feared to

trust Snarling—his manner—his speech might betray him. As usual, all wore masks, and each man's figure was as much disguised as if he wore a domino.

On gaining her decks every man was ordered to come aft, and none obeyed the order without fear, and trembling. It was to them as they anticipated, their last moments; the younger part of the crew clung to the more hardy sailors, and he again, unaccustomed to face a foe of this description, whose face was disguised, exhibited an apprehension which would have been termed cowardice, if manifested against an open faced enemy.

It was now no longer the intention of the Captain of the Spitfire to take the cargo from the vessel, for he was afraid to trust himself to any anchorage, for such a time as would be requisite to land, and to sell it;—money—hard money, that which never betrays the owner, was his object, not a word was spoken. The crew of the brig were placed close aft, whilst the Captain made his observations below, attended by only one man. The bed places in the cabin

were closed; this at once struck the Captain of the Spitfire, as unusual and strange. He withdrew the shutters of one, a man was discovered gathered up into the smallest space, and covered with the bedding, he was entirely under all, and the strange appearance of the bed led to his discovery; the Captain pointed to him, and his man understood the signal; in a moment the concealed coward was lugged most unceremoniously from his lurking place, and fell upon deck without looking at his enemy; he was ordered on deck, and given in charge to one of the Spitfire's crew. The cabin was then rummaged—the holds were examined—some money, which was found in the secret places, handed into the boat, and all which could be taken without a probable discovery, was handed over to the Spitfire; but there remained one caution never omitted, to search the crew of the brig, and the Captain came on deck to be certain that no cruelty was practised; he was walking aft, when his eye suddenly fell upon the man whom he had found under the bedding; he was trembling with fear, and

watching the tall figure in authority, which was now moving towards him. It was now, he thought, the last moment of his life, and in the cowardice of his heart, for not a word had yet been spoken—not a violence committed—he fell on his knees and implored mercy.

It was odd to remark the various expressions on the prisoners' faces; some seemed to lift their inward prayers with the passenger who was imploring that, which it was unnecessary to ask, some who had wound up their courage to the sticking post, looked with an eye of ineffable contempt, and manifested by their resolute bearing, their determination to meet their fate unmoved, without asking the favour, even of their lives. The younger ones lifted their eyes towards the black immoveable countenance, and their hands clasped closer together as they listened to the words of him, who evidently could give the signal of death. The Captain stood close to the kneeling man, his arms were carelessly folded, but his eyes were fixed upon him; suddenly he seemed to awaken from his reverie and touching one

of his men, whispered into his ear ; the seaman ran forward, and in an instant was seen ascending the fore-rigging ; then rose an universal cry from all. It was imagined that the seaman had been sent aloft to reeve the yard rope, and that the death intended, was that of hanging. The younger men clasped his knees, and implored forgiveness ; some spoke hastily about a wife and children, whilst others in silence, watched the seaman with unmoved countenance.

The long black arms waved a desire to be silent, the sailor was at the fore-top-mast head, he was soon in the top-gallant yard, and after having swept the horizon with cautious glance, he looked towards his Captain, and made a signal that nothing was in sight ; he was beckoned down, the poor trembling passenger was ordered into the boat, but before he descended the side, he was blindfolded ; the Captain accompanied him, the crew long kept in suspense, were now liberated, and with a lightness of heart, which hope ever inspires, they leapt about the decks like madmen.

The Captain of the brig was ordered on board his own vessel—he was ordered to part company, and pursue his course, but the passenger was kept on board the schooner.

Glad enough to escape their very unwelcome visitors, few moments were lost on board the brig; the sails were filled, the large studding sail crowded, and the Jane of Liverpool was soon leaving behind her the object of the pirate's search; they hardly ventured to express their surprize at what had happened, until they saw the schooner still hove to, and as she grew less distinct, in size and shape, there was no alteration in her station.

“He's welcome enough to all he's got,” said the Captain to the mate; “he seemed to know more about that passenger than we did, for he has not taken a stiver which belonged to any one else, and I'm blessed if he has not even taken his clothes; I thought that man was a vagabond from his eyes, but how the devil that fellow, who was as black as a crow, should know him and his traps, is a mystery; all his money is gone with him,

and as he could not have got that lot honestly, why we are rid of a rogue, and he has paid his passage money."

The prisoner was kept on deck abaft, under the care of the helmsman, who, although, the vessel was hove to, stood near his post; he was kept closely blind-folded, not a word could he hear, excepting now and then a jingle of words which he could not understand, spoken in a language strange to his ears, and from voices anything but familiar or pleasant. In the mean time, Snarling was receiving his instructions, which, being finished, the prisoner was taken below; opposite to him was seated Snarling, behind him carefully silent, was the Captain.

"Listen, you vagabond," said Snarling, "and tell me the truth in answer to my questions, or by the pipes who played before Moses, your life is not worth a sick man's allowance of grog; what is your name?"

"John Richardson."

"Liar," said Snarling, taking his hand, "do you wish to keep company with the sharks?"

have you no fear that the cat fish will nibble your toes off, or the sword fish touch you up with a pike as sharp as a marling-spike ; do you think, because your traps are marked J. R., your name must be Richardson ; speak again, and mind you, I don't come here to play the fool, or to be fooled. Did you ever see a wet hammock hung up to dry ? and how do you think you'd feel sewed up in one, shrouded in canvass, like a sailor outward bound ? speak !”

“ My name is John Rawlinson.”

“ I knew that, just as certainly as that seven bells was the time to mix the grog.”

“ Where do you live when you are at home ?”

“ In London.”

“ Oh you do—do you. On deck there, bring down the hot pincers. I'll take a pinch of your carcase every time you tell a lie. Now then, where do you live, when you're at home ?”

“ In Wales.”

“ You have told me two lies ; I’ll save you one or two more. You are an attorney, but you are no sea lawyer ; tell me the reason why you left your house to cross the seas to America, for you are not hand-cuffed, and therefore not so great a vagabond as the usual cargoes of live lumber ? You see, I know something about you, or I should not have done you the favour to invite you on board my vessel, whilst your own is going away with a fine wind to New York.”

“ Surely you would not kill me ; I am an innocent man ; take all I have, but spare my life.”

“ You greasy looking scoundrel,” said Snarling, in virtuous indignation ; “ do you think I’d waste my breath to stretch your neck ? Why if we hang an attorney, we should be haunted by lawyers for ever ; we have quite enough of you when alive. Now then, your history. Mind, I warn you, that if we tumble you overboard, and you cannot swim, so drown yourself, we are not answerable for your

death; take care, we have a nice difference between hanging or swimming."

Rawlinson, who was now aware of his destitution, for once in his life told the truth; during the recital of which, the Captain seemed almost in convulsions; but when the last part came of the surprize and recapture of Laura, the presence of Law, and the flight of the attorney to Liverpool, where he had embarked for America, a calmness and attention was observable.

"Amongst your traps, you woman-stealer, there is a jewel which I have seen before; you stole that?"

"My sister gave it me."

"Why you have papers enough in your chest to furnish the pastry-cooks of New York for a couple of years; what are they all about? No, there clap a stopper on your jaw tackles, for if you begin to tell us the history of these yarns, they'll last for ever, so I'll have them inspected by my secretary; in the mean time you may make use of every part of you but your eyes; if you tumble overboard, that's

your own work ; so away with you on deck, and mind, as sure as God made little apples, if you are detected squinting only out of those hawse holes of yours, your minutes will be shorter than my words."

Now was Rawlinson in the power of the man, who had promised never to lose sight of him ; half the vindictive feelings which at first animated him, passed with the assurance of Laura's safety ; and all the malice of disappointed love, which lasts in spite of years of excitement and employment, rose against Margaret, who was the cause, the secret engine, by which the abduction was worked. The jewel he had recognized ; the papers were spread out before him : his prisoner was removed forward, and the handkerchief taken off ; he was placed with his eyes towards the bulwark, and given clearly to understand, that the slightest variation of his optics would lead to unpleasant results ; the schooner wore and stood with her head in shore, whilst the Captain, whose heart beat quickly, as if aware that some discovery attended his researches,

desiring not to be disturbed, but in case of necessity, proceeded to peruse the documents, which his good and unexpected fortune had placed in his hands.

CHAPTER VI.

THE red tape was removed from a packet of papers, and the Captain was placed before them in a state of unusual excitement, his head rested on his hands, his elbows were advanced unusually far upon the table, his eyes devoured the contents, his frame shook with agitation. It was the original will of Sir Ronald de Lancy ; the artful scoundrel had practised a further fraud upon Sir Ronald ; not even the marriage of his daughter was sufficient to warrant his security ; he had copied the document, the original still remained. All the fair inheritance of his birth had been made over to his brother, a brother still, although in law, one who could not claim the right ; the paper which, before his departure from Raven Castle, he had found in the bible recurred to his mind, and he who

from circumstances the most untoward, had bound himself to a life which he abhorred, and which was merely upheld by the excitement, was by the will before him, not only a Baronet, but the possessor of Raven Castle. Bitter were the tears he shed ! For ever must the Castle and its dependencies be to him no place of refuge ; the oath, if man believed in a God, bound him for ever to the Spitfire ;—that oath was a written document to which, since his first appointment to the command, he had never read ; he feared to cast his eye upon it.

How was he now to act ? Here, amongst the papers, was the description of his desertion, letters which had passed between Rawlinson and Sir Ronald, an accurate account of Herbert's intended death, the examination of Blackburn, the list of sums to a vast extent remitted to the United States, the manner in which these sums were invested and the discovery of the whole life of Rawlinson from his first advice to his brother, to his embarkation on board the brig ; even his plan for the ab-

duction of Laura and its execution, with an account of the surprise and his suspicions that Blackburn had betrayed him. It appeared that his daughter, although informed of his intentions in some respects, was ignorant of the fortune her father had amassed ; some parts of the journal in which he recorded his daily actions, with a fidelity strange for villainy, was worthy of the man ; there was in it a mixture of folly, impudence sincerity, and caution.— Thus :

“ Monday the 13th January. Rose early ; the vigilant man must ever be active ; walked round the shrubbery and thought—thought that my new year should be as profitable as my last. Sir Ronald’s a fool ; so is my daughter, for she believes *me* ; she actually believes me such a fool as that I have spent my money and left the winter of age unprovided ; and thus, through her I work upon Sir Ronald. When a man receives his interest from his fortune in the funds, he wishes life to grow shorter, for every day is an age until the next dividend becomes due ;—I avoid that by a general steady increase. Have heard of Albert :

he will not escape me. I must drive him abroad, and then those at home will cease to remember him ; Solomon never said so true or so wise a thing as ‘ out of sight out of mind.’ Laura must be mine, if only to insure the jewels ; I care not for her, she is much too honest, too meek, mild and melancholy for me ; but Montezuma’s plume would sell well. Albert must be a brave man to leave the fashion of the trinket, and not fear discovery.”

There were days and days of such remarks, and the whole journal, will, account of money, and other papers of value were sealed up in a peculiar way, and directed only to be opened in the event of his death.

In his own will, which was likewise amongst the papers, there was one attempt at honesty : he had left his money to Albert to which he admitted it belonged, with a request that a church might be built where his house stood, in order that pious and good people might pray on the spot where he had concocted his villainies ; but he never mentioned the name of

Sir Ronald or his daughter in this *post mortem* act of justice and religion.

It was nearly midnight before Albert had read the papers. Rawlinson had been shown a hammock in the fore peak and given to understand, that any attempt to come on deck would be his first step towards a very long swim. With a resignation quite wonderful in such a villain, he quietly turned in, and in spite of his alarming situation, slept soundly.

There was no friend to whom Albert could pour out his own soul; and there is no greater satisfaction than having a friend to whom a man can unburthen his mind; he traced through the journal, the plots used for his discovery, his description as the deserter and many many ponderings upon the manner in which he had obtained the jewels. The conclusion of one day's remarks, was quite after his own best fashion, "Albert must be one of these things, —a pirate, a merchant or the devil."

What was to be done? in vain Albert thought of returning; his oath and his know-

ledge that the crew would soon manage to dispose of him, were obstacles he could not overcome. He had sworn to live or die with them, and there was no alternative; in the goodness of his heart, he forgave his brother; he wrote a letter which the first opportunity was to convey, in which he mentioned that chance had placed the papers of Rawlinson in his hands, that he had become acquainted with the former circumstances of Sir Ronald's life, and that, in forgiving him, he left him the undisturbed possession of Raven Castle with the title, rather than that the exposure should take place and the bright name of his father be tarnished by the deeds of the son. But how to dispose of his prisoner? if he landed him at Corvo or Flores, he might get to Terceira and thence home without much difficulty. He might evade the law, he might manage to hush up the abduction, which for the sake of Laura might be consented to, even by her adviser; to brand him with the villainy and to leave such a wretch to rot in some desert place, once occurred to him, but where was there

such a place ? besides, he wished to avoid being identified by such a scoundrel ; he paced the deck half the middle watch. He gave no orders, he appeared far from vigilant as usual, and his whole mind seemed absorbed in some great undertaking ; at last his mind was made up ; he ordered the mate to make sail and to stand to the E. N. E. under as much sail as the schooner would bear.

There was no murmur against this order, although the crew had that evening talked of the long wished for return to the Isle of Pines, another visit to Medellin during the fête, or a probable satisfactory visit to Tampico de las Tamulipas, where occasionally recruits of mules, laden with the produce of the mines, arrived. To the crew, the resource of that rich country was well known, and that to ship the treasure to Spain, the money often came to ports of considerable insignificance ; but the word of the Captain was a law against which they never dared to revolt ; he had conducted them in safety through scenes of great difficulty, and where courage and coolness alone

rendered success probable; in the last days of Carlos he had ventured his life even on the same scaffold, and was prepared to have rescued him, had not the crew pronounced his doom; they saw in their Captain a man ever ready to do good, but slow to do that which was cruel; he liberated all prisoners and often, as the stripped wretches returned from their unseen plunderers, the hand of the man who ordered the plunder conveyed some assistance to his victims. He was the child of circumstances, placed in a situation against his will, and acting against the dictates of his own heart.

At dawn of day, another vessel was seen: she was evidently bound to America, and was a merchant vessel; the Spitfire bore down upon her, the long gun signaled her to heave to, and the men in the masks boarded her; they took with them Rawlinson, who received from the Captain, at his parting, a bag of money, in which there was also a note, written in a disguised hand. All his papers were carefully preserved, his clothes, with other articles of minor value, were restored to him, and the

Captain of the stranger was ordered to receive him on board, and to land him at the port to which his ship was destined ; no outrage of any kind was committed, time appeared of more consequence than plunder ; and the out-lawed attorney was suffered to proceed to the place, for which he had embarked in another vessel, unhurt in person, and not much poorer in pocket ; he had only seen one face, and that was the face of a Spaniard, as brown as an olive, and as desperate as a ruffian.

The Spitfire, on leaving the stranger, stood on her course, whilst the brig, equally anxious to part company with her very suspicious neighbour, crowded all sail towards America. Several other vessels were seen, but none were boarded ; the third day, a large frigate was espied to leeward, she was evidently the look out frigate of some squadron, for signals were seen flying ; when first observed, she was under her three topsails jib and spanker, and she was discovered by the Spitfire at least an hour before they saw the schooner. The eye of the man on the top-sail-yard of the

schooner was never off the frigate ; the glass was not for a second idle, and it was one P. M. when a voice declared that the strange frigate to leeward had set her courses, and top-gallant sails, and had hauled dead upon a wind in chase; the Spitfire was running parallel with her. Before this occurred, the one had been standing to the eastward, and the other to westward ; now both hauled on a wind, the Spitfire laying about N.W. by W. and the frigate about E. by N. As the Spitfire had been chased a thousand times, and a thousand times escaped, not one of the crew ever supposed her possible to be overhauled, without some very untoward circumstances occurred, and then the talent of the Captain generally extricated her ; they, therefore, having trimmed the sail to the nicest point, and witnessed her rapidity of sailing, sat down as quietly, as if no vessel was near her ; indeed the great distance of the frigate, her top sails being scarcely above the horizon, and that dead to leeward, rendered the idea of a chase, considering the long nights, perfectly despicable. The Captain betook him-

self to a reperusal of his father's will ; some of the crew sung songs, others smoked ; whilst others again counted their money, and wondered when a cruize on shore would lighten them of the easily acquired wealth.

At two o'clock, the Spitfire was abreast of the frigate, and she was observed to tack, and now the trial of sailing would soon be ascertained ; by way of seeing how much the Spitfire would forereach over her, bearings were accurately taken ; but no more sail was set, the schooner was under her fore and aft sails ; with a reefed top-sails, she could have carried more, but she was never pressed with her canvass ; the frigate appeared under single reefed top-sails, top-gallant-sails, jib and spanker.

This trifling circumstance of the tacking of the frigate, gave rise to many an anecdote of the speed of the Spitfire, and it was remarked by Snarling, that the vessel herself seemed conscious of being pursued, for she invariably sailed faster the more she was pressed in pursuit ; she was in truth a gallant vessel ; her equal had never been found ; she had been

chased more than forty times in two years, and she never had once been obliged to carry all possible sail; as the schooner was only going one point from her course, the Captain considered her, as making the best of her passage, and quieted all his thoughts, disagreeable as they occasionally were, that although the Spitfire was chased, she was making her course good.

The wind remained very steady indeed: it neither increased, nor decreased; some clouds seemed thickening to windward, and the mares' tails, and mackarel scales, also indicated the probable increase of the breeze when the sun went down. So secure had the crew of the Spitfire become in the unrivalled excellence of her sailing, that it was close upon sunset before Snarling was seen at the compass taking the bearings of the frigate.

"I think," said the man at the wheel, "that she has the wind a little more to the eastward, than we have, for I think I see her plainer than I did." The glass was immediately in the hands of the Captain, who, hearing the conversation, came on deck.

"She has neared us a good deal, Snarling," he said, as he took his eyes from the glass; "I see below the reef points of his second reef; and when I left the deck, even with the rise of the sea, I could not see below the first."

"And she's forereached upon us, more than two points," said Snarling. "I'm blessed if she must not be the flying Hœbe at last; there's no other craft that ever came from a dock-yard, either in France or England, who could hold a candle to us, but that frigate."

There was some little anxiety displayed by the Captain, as his mate told this very unpleasant truth; every sailor had heard of the flying Hœbe; she might have gone in chase of the flying Dutchman, and perhaps have captured her. To meet with her, was any thing but pleasant; but the nights were long, and in all probability she would be recalled.

As the Captain pondered over this, the answering pendant was seen at the mast head of the frigate, and shortly afterwards a signal that Albert faithfully remembered. He made out the flags distinctly, "the chase is an enemy!" it appeared from the length of time

the signal was flying, that the ship, to which she was signalizing, was further off than the Spitfire; at last it was hauled down, and the answering pendant was seen responding to a telegraph; for it was dropped and hoisted about a dozen times.

“She has leave to chase,” said Albert; “how many are we going?”

CHAPTER VII.

THE Spitfire was going eight knots an hour, and she was hugging the wind, yet it was evident, to the most careless observer, that the frigate had not only weathered, but forereached; the hull was visible from the top-sail-yard, but the evening had begun to close in, and at that distance, the paint could not be distinguished.

When the Spitfire lost sight of her, she shook a reef out of her top-sail, and tacked. The weather looked lowering to windward, and a squally night was anticipated; a slight alteration was made in the trim, and when the log was hove, the vessel being one point free, she was going eleven knots. She was now standing away from her destination, and those gloomy

forebodings which sometimes give warning of coming misfortunes, seemed to have settled on the crew.

It had ever been the cautious practice of the Captain to avoid any man of war ; he preferred the risk of a chase to the risk of some of the crew recalling his features ; but for that, he might have borne down on the frigate, and dared an investigation ; his English letter of marque would have saved him, and his well tutored crew would have defied all cross examination ; but the guilty are ever timid. Prevention says, a doctor is better than cure ; escape, said the pirate, is better than search. " We can but be overhauled, at last," said Snarling, " but it won't be to-morrow, or the Captain of that infernal craft must see through a cloud as clearly as if it was daylight."

Not a light was shown from the Spitfire, the watch were on the alert, and the most vigilant look-out kept ;—the fate of Carlos was ever on their lips, and the long ceremony of his execution, with all the horrors of a crowd of people to witness the last writhings of a condemned

criminal; the hiss of hatred the scowl of scorn, as one, the enemy of all, was legally murdered, gave a cold creeping of the flesh, which no exertion could warm.

The Spitfire's appearance was always against her; it was impossible to pass unnoticed the huge sails which seemed disproportionate to the low hull; her canvass appeared to bury her by its power, yet no vessel half so lightly skimmed over the seas, or cut more silently through the water.

The crowded sail was soon too much for the increasing wind; but still there was a reluctance to reduce it; the vessel seemed flying for its existence, and the smallest diminution of canvass was never anticipated by the Captain.

"Well," said Snarling, as he looked to windward, and caught a spray on his rough cheek, "this won't do; if we don't shorten sail ourselves, yonder squall, which is coming along like a tornado, will soon save us the trouble of going aloft, by leaving the top-sail yard on deck; why I never knew the craft to stagger before; she trembles like a chap with the ague,

or a man going to be exe——"when he stopped the utterance of the word with a whistle.

"We can hold on, Snarling," said the Captain, "through it. I don't think it's a very stiff one."

"Stiff enough to take the starch out of the finest top-sail that ever came out of Portsmouth yard, Sir; why it's as black as an undertaker, and one can almost hear it whistling a merry note at the mischief it was about to commit."

"Stand by the top-sail halyard, forward; get that weather brace well in, Snarling, and let some hands stand by, to clew the yard down; mind your weather helm, my lad, the squall seems drawing forward; if, after this, the breeze does not slacken, we must shift the jib, and reef all the sails."

"Better do it at once, Sir," said Snarling, "the night gets worse and worse, and if ever there was a breeze painted aloft, it was in the sky before sun set, and in that bur round the moon, which was large enough for an over shot

wheel, for the water mill of the world ; my eyes and limbs, here it comes."

The wind came howling along, and the word to shorten sail was given ; it was partially too late ; the top-sail was split, and the top-mast sprung, and work enough was cut for the crew, for at least an hour.

" I thought so," said Snarling, " the more haste the worst speed ; if we had not been so cursedly afraid of that frigate, which I suppose, about this time is sixty miles off, we should not have had to swallow as much rain as would mix the grog for a crew of a seventy-four."

" Don't be grumbling there," said the Captain, rather sharply, " but look about you, shift the top-mast, get a reef down in the main sail, and make her snug for the night ; it will blow a gale before morning."

" I always like grumbling, when I work," said Snarling, as he lent his best hand to repair the mischief. There were plenty of hands, and all good and desperate seamen to obey the

orders. Reefs were taken in all the sails ; the jib shifted for a fourth jib, and by midnight, the Spitfire was surging through the sea, at the rate of twelve knots an hour ; they passed two vessels and saw the light of an admiral's ship ; but the night was so dark that the schooner was unobserved.

" Aye," said Snarling, as he kept his eye on the admiral's light, "there's the regular old channel groper ; three top-sails, a mizen and fore-top-mast stay-sail ; there they go, as much in line as a flight of wild geese ; all hands fast asleep and not a bad prize for some of them close along side ; keep that light in the binnacle you, Juan, concealed ; one at the time is plenty to chase us ; we are safe enough now, for the frigate will take a cruize to herself, and won't come back to this rendezvous for a week, or two."

" When we are well passed these ships, Snarling," said the Captain, "bear right up, keep her about south, and carry as much sail as you can."

" Aye, aye, Sir," answered Snarling, "that's

just the way to double them all ; before daylight we shall be *fifty* miles to leeward, and if the frigate has played Tom Cox's traverse, and tumbles upon us at daylight, it's not the little Spitfire which he'll take without a long run."

Long before daylight the anxiety of the crew manifested itself ; it was the first time they had ever found their rival at sailing, and they knew that their suspicious movements would entail upon them a search which, with all their ingenuity, they could but ill bear. As the first streak of grey was discernable, the glasses were in use ; the only man in the whole crew who seemed quite indifferent to the observation being Snarling ; he declared the schooner had been badly steered, and that, as for any frigate ever built, beating the Spitfire, was just as unlikely as the Lord Mayor of London commanding the channel fleet. Gradually the revolving world turned towards the sun, and the daylight grew distinct ; not a sail was in sight ; the glass had been directed carefully to every part of the horizon ; there was not a speck ; and Snarling, as he went down below for the

first time since eight o'clock the preceding night, rubbed his hands as he said, "More frightened than hurt, and I think if we are so cursedly afraid of our throats, we had better wreck the craft on the Isle of Pines, and each man set up his own establishment."

A beam of joy lightened the face of the Captain. It was attributed to the absence of the frigate, but far other thoughts occupied his mind; he now altered his course to W. N. W. hauling up close upon a wind. The only words which fell from his lips, after his order was given, being, "I should not like it to happen until one vessel was found which could beat us."

The breeze increased as the sun rose, which it did, red and fiery; there was no occasion to run the hazard of a sprung lower mast, sail was reduced; and at noon this terror of the seas was tossed about, to use Snarling's expression like a boy in a blanket. The wind grew louder and stronger; the close reefed fore and aft-fore-sail, triced up high enough to allow a sea to pass under it, all the sail was set, and if

ever the figurative expression of riding like a duck upon the water, was applicable to any vessel, that vessel was the Spitfire. Small as she was, comparatively speaking, with ships of the line, her decks were as dry ; the long sneaking vessel met the coming sea ; rose easily on its summit, and then sank slowly in the abyss. Even when the toppling sea came hurriedly along, its crest bursting with the foam, which the wind conveyed like a shower of rain, the gallant schooner faced it steadily ; and allowing it to burst upon her chest tree, distributed its gifts to all equally.

There was no day long enough for the Captain, the perusal of Rawlinson's journal, which for years had marked the misery of the man, who, in a tone of levity, had recorded his day's operations, struck him at every line. Here was discovered the plot to find out and dispatch Herbert ; the object of the visit to the cottage where Albert had met his enemy as a deserter ; the whole plan by which Laura was to have been captured, and the narrow escape

of the Captain at the ball. Here was written, by the hand of his greatest enemy, the probable result of his capture ; either death as a deserter ; or transportation for a felony, if not the gallows for a high-way robbery ; every word was recorded, the time was punctually marked, success sure, disgrace inevitable had he been captured. No bitter thought envenomed the last action of Albert ; he had covered his enemy with generosity, he had not allowed him to be plundered ; and he had set him forward in his cruize to a land of security, with only a hint, that on that misnamed land of liberty, he might, by repentance, work out forgiveness from Him, who is the father of all, which the laws of civilized community, never could have extended to such a sinner.

These papers and packets, the most valuable of all prizes which ever had fallen into his hands, were carefully directed to Mr. Law, with instructions not to proceed in any suit, until further directions from Albert, or to be opened but by his order ; with this parcel, was a letter to Laura, congratulating her on her escape ; and praying her to have further confi-

dence in one, the object of whose life, was once more to throw himself at her feet.

His days passed merrily ; those well employed find time for every thing ; are ever cheerful, and have ever a moment to spare for the conversation of a friend ; the idle and the frivolous have never one second to spare, and consume a day in great excitement, endeavouring to kill time, the most inveterate and most constant of all their enemies.

The crew below had no task to perform on deck ; they sat down, and mended their clothes ; some more greedy than the rest counted their dollars ; but generally speaking, the crew like all gamblers were ever generous, and thought little of the hereafter.

At sunset, there was no chance of an alteration of the weather ; the crew long accustomed to some occupation, began to talk over past events, and this hugging the English coast, which was evidently the Captain's intention was commented upon with much acrimony ; in short, opinions were circulated, which, had not the oath been remembered, might have led to unpleasant consequences.

"Let's have a bottle of grog, a cigar, and a song," said Snarling; "we must tune up another pipe, now Carlos is gone; and if none of you will start an end, I'm just the one as will set the example."

The very proposition turned the tide of discord. What sailor can be cast down, when grog is proposed, or a stave volunteered? all seemed in an instant prepared to join in the fun, while Snarling, who was only acting in accordance with his Captain's wishes, soon found a subject to amuse his audience.

Although smoking was not generally allowed between decks, yet as the wind was high, the weather cold and chilly, with occasional showers of rain, the crew huddled together, the cigars were lighted, the grog mixed, and swung to avoid its capsizing; and Snarling, by way of setting an example, turned up his pipe, and sung—

There's a vessel which swims on the seas,
She belongs to all parts of the world!
She is found in the Mexican breeze,
On the sea which the Tiffoon has curled.

Every craft which she meets is her prize ;
But she deals not in blood or in slaughter,
Though her deeds may be seen from the skies,
The records are popped under water.
She's at war, though she's never in strife,
For she pounces at once on her prey,
And hers is the conjuror's life,
Which varies with each coming day.
Success to the Spitfire—the craft !
Which chased, yet no vessel had caught her ;
From her stem, to the transom abaft,
She's the beauty, and pride of the water.

“ Well, I never thought to see the craft,” said Juan, as Snarling finished, “ which could gain upon us in a breeze, when we could carry the top-sail, and be in smooth water ; there was not sea enough to give a duck a head ache ; yet I'm blessed if that frigate did not creep up to us, as if we had been at anchor.”

“ She was built in France,” said another, “ and that accounts for her sailing so well ; those Frenchmen have the nimblest legs in the world.”

"Aye," said Snarling, "to run away with; but they are never so quick to chase; it was an English frigate, and that was the fleet to which she belonged, that we crossed last night. It's the only ship in the world we need fear, it's the flying Hœbe."

"I should like to know," said another, "why we did not take the cargo out of that craft the other day, and why that red-headed rascal was given his money back? Our other Captain used to tell all about where we were going, and what was done; but this man keeps rummaging some old papers, and when he gets half across the Atlantic, turns tail, and runs us smack into the jaws of the channel fleet."

"It was a good night's work though, which made him our Captain; and I dare say Carlos told him of it, before the screw choked his luff; and if he had not have taken the oath, he would have left his head behind him; near Puerto Cavallo."

"He is the best man we ever had, or could

have," replied Snarling ; " for my part, I never liked that slaughtering innocent people, and robbing churches."

" Why you set us going at Falmouth."

" Not I ! It was Carlos, who swore he was doing his religion a service by plundering ours."

" Well, that's all right," said Juan, " all the heretic parsons ought to be burnt ; but I think we are not the best people to quarrel about religion, although those who have the least, generally roar the loudest about it. Who'll tell us the yarn about the Captain, how he came here, and who he is, and what's his real name ?"

" Aye," said Snarling, " he's a clever fellow who can answer all these questions. I can tell how he came here, and I can tell you some of his names, for he has as many as would fill the open list of a seventy-four ; but which is the right, out of all these pursers' names I can't tell any more than the figure head."

" Well then," said Juan, " just tell us how he came here ?"

" This is all about it," continued Snarling ;

“it was at that business, as Puerto Cavallo, when Carlos got the girl aboard in boy’s clothes, and we went on shore at night to the church; that was the same girl, who he murdered at Cadiz. It was after we had exchanged some property with those men who left their money on the tables without counting it, that our Captain, who was the very devil at opening houses, went to the house of the father of the girl; he had pledged himself not to plunder him, but no sooner did he see some money than he began to place it in his pocket; the girl called on Carlos to protect her father; high words arose and a row ensued, in the midst of which, our present Captain, dressed as an English sailor, appeared just as Carlos, to save the father of the girl, stabbed the Captain, A riot ensued; the girl, on seeing the blood, rushed into the street, and called for assistance. Women always bawl out, or faint directly the danger’s over; they never do it at the time, and the guard seeing how the cat was jumping came down with muskets and baggonets, and pikes and points enough in all shapes, to have

set up so many hemp cleaners' shackles. Somehow, this young shaver saw the danger better than any of us ; we were all for retreating into the house, and making good our defence there, but he called out that if we did we should be hemmed in until more men came to the assistance of the soldiers, and that then, we must either surrender, or make good our retreat through the same street, that it was then requisite to pass. ' Here,' said he, as he took hold of four of us, Carlos was one, ' do you kick up a bit of a row here, whilst we retire to the next corner, and then make a retreat when you hear us shout, fire,' this was done all as orderly as the marines at exercise. The Spanish guard on hearing us blaze away—we had only pistols—retreated a little and then our lads rejoined us, as we, having accomplished our object, fell back towards the boats, taking advantage of the moment of surprise we had occasioned. They soon recovered their courage, and on they came like mad lions making as much row as the present squall ; but we had got close to the boats, and were on the open

either to be handed over to Davy Jones's locker blindfolded, or be Captain of us.

"It was a toss up which he took; he did not care about death any more than an Indian prisoner; but when we came to place the black handkerchief over his eyes, and Carlos told him that he might say adios to all the women in the world, he gave a kind of hiccup, and a sigh, muttered something like a lawyer, which some said was Laura, and consented to remain, if he was Captain."

" 'Then,' said Carlos, 'you will take the oath?'"

" 'Anything,' he answered, in a kind of despair, like a man with a tooth ache.

" 'Then kneel down,' said Carlos; 'now swear upon this cross,' and he gave him the handle of a sword, 'that to-morrow you will take the oath, we shall direct you to take.'

" 'Of what nature is it?' said he.

" 'Of that nature,' Carlos whispered in his ear, 'that may give you an opportunity of seeing her again, whilst without it, the black

handkerchief, and the shark will be nearer you than at present.'

" 'I swear,' he said, "though heaven is my witness, how much against me it is to do so.'

" He's mighty squeamish thought I, about his oath, and the command of the finest craft afloat."

" Excepting that frigate yesterday," interrupted Juan.

" Excepting, you hold your tongue," said Snarling, "I won't tell you the rest of the yarn."

" Spin away mate, and don't be angry."

" Well, the next day came, and we all mustered in clean rigging, armed with cutlasses and bare headed, as he came up the hatchway. We all drew our weapons, knelt down and held the points to our hearts; we then swore the oath, to be true to him, never to murmur against his orders, to assist him against any, with our lives, who dared dispute his command; to live, to die with him, and as long as the

Spitfire floated, to be his slaves—his subjects.”

“ I never took that oath,” said Juan.

“ You were a boy, when we caught you, but in a month you will be sworn ; we all know from experience, that with us there must be but one captain, one king. We then, every one of us, drew some blood with the point of the sword, and as he took a taste of us, we bowed our heads to the deck, and he placed his foot on the neck of each of us.

“ It was then his turn.—Lord love you, that man who is as cool as the snow on the Mexican mountain of Orizava, became just as white, and just as cold as it ; whilst the next moment, the large drops of perspiration ran down him, as if a man had watered his head with a watering pot. He could not speak for some time, so we gave him some wine to wash the blood down, and Carlos, holding the glass, bade him wound himself, so that we might unite ourselves to him by the bond of blood. It was not fear which made him hesitate to tap

his arm ; not fear of the pain, but it was something which warned him of the solemnity of the affair. The large crucifix was before his eyes ; those who had sworn to obey him, were around him, and he saw from the manner we expressed ourselves, that he would have to bind himself, until death, unto us, and to the Spitfire ; but his imagination, heightened as it was, never could contemplate the oath, about to be administered ; at last with a desperate stab, as if he could not feel bodily pain, he plunged the sharp point of a dirk into his arm, and the blood flowed copiously. Carlos made him say ‘ As I bound myself to you with blood, so bind yourselves to me ; this blood is now yours, as yours is mine ; from this moment we are one in cause, one in heart, one in blood ; you are my relations by that tie, and none others have I but you, until death shall part us.’

“ We all again knelt down, and each man drank a drop of the blood, each man made the sign of the cross, and each man repeated aloud

the words—the same words which the Captain had said. It seemed a weight off the Captain's mind, as he thought the ceremony was concluded, and his heart seemed to beat quicker, when he was told to kneel down, and hold the small silver crucifix which is always put upon any dead man before we bury him; the parchment was placed in his hand, and he read aloud the oath, which binds him for ever to us."

"What is it?" said Juan.

"That which I would not repeat in this gale of wind; not whilst this storm rages, and that power which is invoked manifests itself in it; but the oath was such, that he trembled like an infant, as he pledged his soul to his obedience to it; there was no power left unimplored to shower down damnation on his heart, if he swerved from it; he is ours, as we are his;—the tie cannot be dissolved, until not a plank remains of the Spitfire; not a man breathes who is now in her! The shores of all nations become the places of our recreation,

as of our crimes. The power invested in Morgan of old, is invested in our Captain; the names of the great buccaneers, such as Francis Lolonois, Pierre le Grand, Morgan, Sawkins, Sharp, Watling and Lawrence de Graff, and others, are by us looked upon as a former race of kings; to whose sovereignty our Captain has succeeded; and never yet, excepting in the case of Sharp and Watling, has any Captain been cashiered. The breaking of our king is as culpable an act, as the regicide who has broken his oath of allegiance; and each man would rise to kill the mutineer, who dared hatch treason against his commander. Think of that, Juan, and you know the substance of the oath. The whole world may melt away, but as long as the Spitfire lasts, we are one crew, under one Captain; and now, my lads, hurrah for the hammocks! and never mind which way we steer, for the world is our plaything, and our profit; we shall soon return to our cavern in the Isle of Pines, and there we shall see those who have served like us,

in a good old age, surrounded by luxuries, and enjoying as much pleasure as their silvered heads could desire."

CHAPTER VIII.

Not very differently had the Captain passed his time ; he was in the solitude of his own cabin ; the wind howled and roared, the creaking vessel rolled over the high seas, the foam of the wave flew harmlessly over the schooner, as she reeled and lurched in the gale. The useless helm was lashed half a turn a lee, whilst the fore and aft-fore-sail, nearly splitting with the violence of the wind, kept the Spitfire from falling too far to leeward.

With his legs twisted round those of his table, which was lashed to the deck, and by the aid of a lamp, which swung to and fro with increased violence as the schooner met the sea, the Captain read again the will of his

father; he knew it by heart, and yet there was a pleasure in seeing the signature of his parent. The kindness which manifested itself throughout, the tender regard for his wife's honour, the justice of the parent! in replacing it, he saw the oath which bound him for ever to the lawless life he had pursued, and must continue to pursue; he took this fatal document, and supporting his burning forehead in his hands, he again perused it; he had never dared to touch it; but now the very elements tempted him to look; the night was such that the foulest imagination might conjure up as the dark hour for framing such a document. The lightning's flash as it burst superior to the lamp's flickering flame, rejoiced, more than alarmed the Captain whilst the long roll of the nearing thunder, seemed music to his mind.

He paused at one sentence. "I swear by all above in heaven, and all registered in hell, by the storm, by the wind, the thunder's thunder, and the lightning's flash, never to leave her as long as a plank remains to float upon, not whilst one of the crew survive in

the battle, as long as she floats I am her Captain, the chosen chief, which no subterfuge can evade, no law annul; from this day to the day of my death, I am the brother of every man amongst you; and so may those elements, and those powers crush me with eternal torments, cursing me with all horrible diseases whilst living, wasting away in the leprosy of contamination, until an everlasting hell receives me—if I in this forfeit my word, or evade the act.”

There was another clause which bound him to do his utmost to preserve the vessel under every circumstance, and those bound to the Spitfire. The chain of servitude was clogged to his leg; it was useless repining; he read and re-read the several sentences, but each was dependant upon the other, and where, apparently the quick eye of hope detected a flaw, the next paragraph crushed that hope, and rendered all evasion impossible.

Even at this moment the gathering clouds to windward, and the bright gleam of the forked lightning warned him of his oath; there

were precautions to be taken against the wind and the lightning; and the Captain, having uttered a hasty prayer for forgiveness, went on deck.

To windward all was dark and dreary; the moon, which occasionally for a second was seen, as the skud blew from its face the dark veil of clouds which enveloped it, was surrounded by the ominous ring; whilst the lightning to windward, came rapidly on, as the thunder clouds were rolled to leeward.

He gave his orders coolly and collectedly, and then retiring to the weather-quarter, he watched the flashes, and counted the seconds which elapsed before the roll of the thunder began, thus estimating the distance. It was but a mile to windward, and in less than a minute, the cloud might burst over them, and had not Laura's figure skimmed over his recollections of the past—for her remembrance caused all his crime—he would have implored the lightning to burst upon the schooner, and by its tremendous power absolve the oath, and leave the crew to struggle for existence.

The idea had scarcely passed, when a flash broke close alongside it ; fell about a foot to windward, whilst the next struck the fore-top-mast, split it from its head to his heel, wounded the head of the fore-mast, and passed apparently, through the vessel ; the shock and the glare startled those below, one of whom, gave the alarm of fire so palpably visible was the spark, whilst the voice of the Captain, summoning his crew, followed the roar of the thunder, which seemed actually on board of the schooner. The peak halyards gave way, and the gaff came down, as quick as thought a small storm try-sail was shown abaft, and the Spitfire's head kept up to the sea. All was confusion forward, the top-mast soon fell, and carried with it the head of the wounded fore-mast ; the bowsprit was unsupported, but it remained firm, whilst the fore-mast stood, although unsupported by a single rope.

Every man on board the Spitfire had been nursed in the lap of danger ; there was no murmur at the untoward event ; the wreck was

cleared away, the lower and top-sail-yard, with the sail of the latter preserved, and the fore-cap luckily saved; yet there stood the solitary spar, broken off about four feet below the cap. Each sea was now looked at with horror; the vessel was unmanageable as to escape, and would become liable to be overhauled by any of the numerous cruisers, which, at that time, swarmed on the seas. There was no occasion, as in other vessels, to cheer the crew on to exertion—their lives were on the event, and each man being an able seaman, knew without the continued instructions, what was required. By two o'clock all was snug; but, although every man had attempted to swarm up the naked spar, not one had succeeded. The seas rolled heavily, and the Spitfire, deprived of the sail under which a schooner should always be hove to, laboured more than was usual.

No one had been more active than Snarling; three times he had succeeded in getting a few feet above the deck, but each time he had been obliged to slacken his hold, he gave it

up at last, fairly exhausted, although as he laid on his back, he kept his eye on the spar, and vowed to save it yet.

Not less anxious was the Captain, and equally emulous of Snarling were all the crew ; their general safety was in their speed ; thus unexpectedly arrested, the vessel rolled heavily and at each pitch every eye was directed aloft ; still the foremast stood and still the gale increased.

It was a moment of intense anxiety when the morning clouds rolled away and daylight became perceptible ; far as the eye could reach, no vessel appeared to alarm them. Fatigued as they were, they never relaxed in their exertions, sheers were erected in a manner which the dexterity of practised seamen alone can accomplish, large cleats were nailed to the foremast head, the old rigging shortened served for shrouds ; by two o'clock in the evening, the Spitfire was under her usual sail, a topmast pointed and every thing ready in the event of an emergency ; the wind having shifted a couple of points to the westward the Spitfire steered a course to make the Scilly Islands.

It was now that Snarling ventured to suggest to Albert the impending danger of running into an English port, to replace the short foremast. "Our character," said the hard working sailor is a little damaged in Europe, and at our own place at the Isle of Pines, we have lower masts all ready, cut, and dry and seasoned; and if I may be as bold as to say it, Sir, I think now we look more suspicious than ever, and less capable of giving leg bail."

"Snarling," said the Captain, "last night I read over the oath which binds us in one bond; there I see the power with which you have invested me. Say not another word, I have an object in view dearer to me than my exiled life, and that object I must and will accomplish. I do not intend to stay in any port to refit, I care not if we never anchor, but I must once more go to London. The thief who escapes the hounds of justice, the duellist who comes unscathed from frequent rencontres, the sailor who braves and surmounts a thousand dangers, all grow bold from their hair breadth escapes; the eye, the nerve, the ear, become familiar with danger, and are firm from

frequent incidents ; perilous, desperate, so have I become ! I found myself on the scaffold with Carlos, the very chair in which he was executed I touched, aye, even when he was in it and calling for assistance to the priest below ! I have been within five minutes of the hands of justice in England ; but I escaped their grasp and now accustomed to be near, but ever to evade, I go once more, and for the last time. Henceforth we must shift our grounds ; old England must be our greatest enemy ; we must not talk, Snarling, of Portsmouth harbour and all the scenes we have witnessed in our first burst of delight ; no, no, my old friend, we must forget our friends, our relations, our homes, and be driven like a weed in the Florida stream, wheresoever the wind and the sea impel us."

" I hope not, Sir," said Snarling, " and I'm not the man to hang my head down at either danger or difficulty ; but never again to see the shores of old England, never again to hear the cheerful song, or shuffle a dance with my old

friend, that's more than I bargained for when my lips muttered out the oath. Who cares for a little danger to see the land again?"

"Why just now, you told me how dangerous it was."

"But I forgot at that moment what you have now brought to my mind. D—it, I'd rather be hung in England than ride a horse with ribbons on his tail like a colonel of cavalry in Mexico! I'd rather sweep the streets with a log to my leg in Portsmouth, than be governor of St. Jago de Cuba."

"I am sorry I spoke of it, Snarling," said Albert, as his keen searching eye watched every movement of the weather beaten tar.

"It makes a man think a bit, Sir; for I never got into this scrape any more than yourself with my eyes open. I was obliged to enter for the craft, or to walk about looking for pearls in oyster shells at the bottom of the sea, but I always had a hope that one day or another, something might turn up, which would land us in England."

"I do not see any chance, Snarling, excepting one, which might get us out of the scrape."

"Say what it is, Sir; and you know Tom Snarling well enough to trust him."

"Another time, Snarling, another time, we are all young yet, and I dare say you have not saved money enough."

"Money enough, Sir, why do you think I want to walk about with my hands in my pockets, wondering how long I'm to live, and be very busy doing nothing? I'm yet young enough for a frigate, and I'll be in one yet before I die."

It was but a few days after this conversation, which had been brought on by Albert merely to see how much love of home was left in the breast of his mate, that the Spitfire made the Ram Head, and Albert thought of landing, giving instructions to Snarling, to keep the schooner at sea, until the tenth day, when he was again to stand in and make the land. A certain flush of Snarling's countenance alarmed him, and he at once resolved not to

hazard his crew, by the wavering disposition of his mate ; he was close to one of the Cawsand bay boats and he recognized instantly one of those men who formerly had screened him when he deserted. He feared to trust himself into his hands and without hesitation tacked and stood out to sea. It was sunset and the dark nights of December afforded him a shelter from observation.

Whilst Snarling paced the deck with hurried steps, Albert busied himself in arranging his papers, and settling in his mind the letters he was about to write. He inclosed the packet to Law, with an injunction, that it was on no account to be opened, but in the event of his death, which would be made known, when it occurred, to the lawyer. He was directed not to pursue any inquiries, concerning Sir Ronald de Lancy, or in any manner to disturb Lady de Lancy with rumours concerning the flight of Rawlinson ; and there was another letter which caused him much pain and time directed to Laura Mackenzie. It ran thus :—

“ My long silence might have caused dis-

pleasure, but circumstances can be pleaded in extenuation. I know all that has happened and more than you are aware of. I fear no rival in your affections, for my heart is confident of the honesty of your own ; you have pledged it to one whose wayward life estranges him from you, but you are ever present in the calm, the breeze, or the storm ; there is not a moment when your image deserts my mind, and seeing you thus ever by my side, I derive comfort and confidence in your absence. The man who insulted you has met his fate ; he has been relieved by the one, who next to yourself he would have injured ; he has received good from him whose revenge could not be better satiated ;—you will never hear of him more ; his silence is sealed, although he lives in America. Of this strange communication, I pray you think kindly. I know of your being under the guardianship of Mr. Law ; by this conveyance he receives my will, with injunctions to open it and meet its wishes, if, at the end of six months, I do not appear and claim my bride ; I am close to you now, but I dare not see you

and you are ever present to me, Laura. My own, my dearest Laura, be in accordance with my wishes for this time, and at the expiration of the six months you shall be mine never to part, or I shall be no more, and my wealth yours. In all seasons, be kind and good to Herbert; for him I have made ample provision hereafter; place confidence in that excellent man who has befriended you already, listen to his advice and be to him a daughter; but if I yet can control you by my counsel, by my wishes, if the heart of Laura is not estranged from me, never write to Raven Castle; from that you are doomed to be a stranger until my return, then you may claim as a right, what has been accorded you as a civility. You may show this to your adviser; he will see more in it than perhaps you can divine. Believe in my love, in my constant unalterable affection; before six months are elapsed, I shall live in your presence, or die an exile; but I cling to the present, and in that hope urge you to believe me coming until the last moment of my allotted time. God bless you, and keep you under the

shadow of his protection. Again I say, believe, trust in me,

Your devoted,

ALBERT DE LANCY."

This, with a packet of papers and deeds and journals were landed by Albert himself at Plymouth, booked and directed to Mr. Law; he then returned to the Spitfire and with a heart considerably relieved, he stretched across the Atlantic to the Isle of Pines.

Although frequently chased, the Spitfire made good her passage, and took to the cavern of the pirates a considerable booty, in which were luxuries plundered from various vessels; these luxuries were handed over to the superannuated men, who wearied out life in utter seclusion; they had one or two canoes in which they amused themselves fishing, but they never dared hazard a trip to any other island, or to the main land. In the cavern far from the beach which surrounded the narrow inlet, old men and women lingered out life, having spent their early days in crime, and their old age in

idleness—too slothful to be rioters—too timid to depart; day after day, and night after night passed in the usual monotonous routine—love was withered, play alone survived there. By the light of a large lamp which once adorned a church, seated on carpets which covered the boards, these men of crime, and women, once of lasciviousness, gambled away their remaining days and nights, at monté; they had plenty of money, which although coveted, was useless, excepting on the arrival of the Spitfire, when some of the crew had articles of small value, of which they were anxious to dispose.

The dark sombre appearance of this cavern, which for years and years had been the resort, in times past, of the buccaneers, once or twice a year resounded with the gay notes of the human voice. The arrival of the Spitfire was the signal of general rejoicing; then all the long pent up restraint of drunkenness broke adrift; all the excesses to which a life of continued excitement prompts the inclination, were at once resorted to; the old endeavoured to become young, the young certain of becoming debili-

tated, orgies revolting to decency had been long customary when the schooner arrived, and drunken riots led to brawls and discontent; the night was wearied by the excesses, and the cool morning aroused them to the trifling labour, such inebriation allowed. There were no inhabitants but themselves; the small inlet which concealed the schooner from the sea, was unknown to the cruizers who seldom or ever landed on the island, and were ever seen by the vigilant pirates, who instantly withdrew to the cave, the mouth of which, even if discovered, would not tempt being explored.

On this island there were three or four negroes—the race doomed from the time of Adam to be slaves, these poor fellows had intended to run away from their masters on the Island of Cuba, and in order to procure money for their departure, they had taken a canoe, and landed in the Isle of Pines, to turn turtle during the night, and to sell them the next morning. They had made two successful trips, perceived by the pirates, and the third time, their last intended trip, they were surprised, seized and

made greater slaves their canoe was soon converted into fuel; by day they were unable to escape, and by night they were always secured. The drunken revel was their only hope, but before the night's debauch began, some wary pirate always secured them more firmly than before.

On this night a murder was committed, which Albert could not restrain, for his authority ceased when the crew landed. In the heat of excitement a bet was laid, that one of the crew was a better marksman than the other, and various means were devised to put the skill of each of the noisy braggadacios to the test.

"What's the use," said one, "of blazing away at a tree, when we shall quarrel about the exact centre? There's old Mungo, who is now getting a leg as big as an elephant's, who can scarcely crawl, and who is useless to us, and loathsome to himself, stick him against the tree, and the one who kills him wins the bet."

Albert, who never allowed himself to be the

least inebriated, at once saw that a deed of horror would in all probability be carried into execution. To interfere with any show of authority would have led to some act of desperation of the old pirates, who were lords of the island, and to reason with drunken men was a waste of words. He however tried to turn their thoughts in another direction: He sat down, filled his glass, sung a song; a mark of hilarity long since disused by one whose every moment was a torment; he talked of their feats of plunder; their once daring inroad to the city of Mexico, their narrow escape from Puebla, their forced concealment in the woods of the Pinal; their frequent scenes of excitement at Medellin at Campeche, or on the coast of Honduras, but all in vain. No sooner had his story ended, than the same clamorous half drunken comrade recollected the wound his vanity had received, the bet he had made, and his disposition to put his skill to the test. Again, Albert endeavoured, by making him dead drunk, to avoid the horrible scene which might ensue. He was just in that state, to

know that further intoxication would render his vision incorrect; he was at that unfortunate pitch, when an excited man is alive to any plot, and cautious to avoid the consequences. Words ran high, and one of the old men unfortunately backed largely the skill of the quietest man; the whole crew seemed seized with the same hellish delight of slaughter, from which they had, for two years been held back by the authority of their Captain; their desire was fanned by one of the old superannuated wretches, who declared that Mungo was more troublesome than all the negroes put together, and that all hands had become tired of beating him in order to force him to his work, whilst the fainting wretch laid down and received their stripes without a murmur over his legs, now labouring under elephantiasis.

Once more, Albert for a second stopped their intentions by startling apprehensions of discovery by the noise of the muskets. A drunken man is ever valorous; wine places the drunkard who, when sober is a coward, on a par with the most valiant; his reason which prompts his

fear is quenched by wine, and as the danger is undervalued, it is despised.

“Put him up, lug the lazy lumber to the tree; he won’t walk there without assistance, but we’ll soon lead him along like a bull by the horns, and save him his morning’s beating.”

The poor object of this brutal bet was at that moment happy; exhausted nature had lulled him to sleep, and in spite of the noisy brawl, the hoarse voices, the curses, execrations, clamorous choruses, or angry discussions, he slept soundly, quietly, even when his name was called. “Mungo, come here, you sleepy hound,” resounded through the cavern, which at last awoke the victim; but the poor fellow awoke to intense pain, and was unable to rise; the delay occasioned a desire to inflict more cruelty; one proposed trying the application of a red hot nail, others suggested the stick, and amidst the noise and the revelry, the excitement and the cruelty, the unfortunate black aroused himself, in spite of torments almost beyond imagination, and tottered to the table.

“Carry this rope,” said one, as he threw some fathoms of small cord over his shoulders, “carry this, and the lantern, and stay by the first tree.”

The grey-headed negro, smarting under every step, slowly proceeded to the spot ; and there sitting at its roots, he calmly awaited some other order ; he was ignorant of the bet, and of his destiny.

The party rose, and once again the voice of Albert, in the tone of command, called upon his crew to obey him, and desist ; instantly one of the older men interfered, for he would not allow the oath which bound the Spitfire crew to them, whilst at the island, to be weakened in force, by any giving orders, but those in whom all authority was reposed. It was now useless, indeed the last endeavour had only rendered the crew more clamorous, more determined. All intervention was now at an end ; the half drunken disputants selected their arms, and furnished themselves with ammunition, and during this interval, Albert endeavoured

once more to save the black, by carrying him to the schooner, and there asserting his authority.

The uneven ground rendered the attempt abortive, and the gallant fellow fell in the attempt; too soon came the revellers; the unfortunate wretch was lashed to a tree, and the murderers retired about one hundred yards; the miserable lantern which shed its treacherous light, was placed upon a nail exactly over the head of Mungo, who stood with all the patient resignation of that much injured class, when their oppressors practice their wanton cruelties and barbarities; he then scarcely murmured; he saw their object, and in a tone piteous to hear, asked; "Why for kill poor Mungo?" even then the love of life subjected as it was, to every indignity, every torment, rose above the fear of death. So true it is, that the most loathsome life imagination can suggest, is paradise to what in death. Here was the slave, the miserable, we fear oppressed, and injured slave, who would have supplicated for existence, although

that existence would have been one of misery.

"Never mind, Mungo," said one fellow, as he measured the ground, "you have at least an hour to stand upon those large legs. I'll bet they don't hit you to kill you under that time; so you have lots of minutes to get ready for the change."

Once more the interposing voice of Albert was heard; he offered to buy Mungo, at an enormous price; but he was the general property, and the consent of all was requisite; this, it was useless to hope for. "For my sake," he said, "grant the request at my supplication." Now the lawless pirate was a moment freed from his oath, and then shewed his freedom. Beaten back and insulted, Albert shook hands with the black, who blessed him, and prayed that he might soon be free from such associates; in the prayer no one more earnestly joined than the Captain, but his heart sickened, when he thought how impossible, or improbable, such an event could be. He then retired to the furthest corner of the cave, as if

to avoid the sound, which would convey to him the death of the innocent black. Shot after shot, laugh after laugh, and groan succeeding groan, informed him of the progress of this hellish sport; the black had been wounded several times, but no fortunate sight directed the coup-de-grace; quite in vain they sought to decide their bet, neither could succeed in being the murderer, although their heart's warmest wishes were on each shot. At last the first man who had proposed the sport, in a rage at his continued misses, ran to the poor black, and placing the muzzle against his heart, discharged the gun. The head fell instantly forward, and the cords alone supported the murdered slave.

The scene of revelling was then renewed, and the first streak of dawn appeared before the disgusting debauch had finished; when the drunkard and the murderer sunk into temporary forgetfulness, to awake to sickness of body and of mind. There was one man who paced the island in all the excitement of men-

tal anguish. It was the Captain ; his cautious habit warned him to sweep the horizon, before he ventured to think of the last night's action. There was a vessel lying becalmed, some few miles from the island, with her boat lowered down ; the idle sail flapped against the mast, as the last of the land breeze died away, and the heat of the sun became oppressive ; on the smooth surface of this clear mirror of the skies, floated a man of war brig ; if any of the crew landed, the body of the black might betray them. In an instant he hurried to the cave, and called Snarling, who, with himself, had made an attempt to save the poor fellow ; and who, seeing the general disposition to drunkenness, had for once conquered his desire to participate in this sailors' recreation, and slept on board the schooner.

It was an instant of much alarm ; true, the Spitfire's fore-mast was replaced, the sails bent, and a light breeze gently swept the island, sufficient to have blown her clear of the harbour ; but her crew were drunk ; not a man

saving the two slaves, who still were ignorant of Mungo's death could stand, and here close to them, was a man-of-war-brig.

The first great object was to bury the dead, and those who had endeavoured to save, now buried the body; there was no ceremony, no service, both dug the grave, and in the state in which he died, he was interred.

"This is a sad end, Snarling," said Albert, as he endeavoured to cool himself after the exertion; "and how soon we may share this man's fate, we can little guess; the drunkards might have selected you as easily as Mungo, and our own men might have bet upon our death."

"Not whilst there is two of us sober, at any rate," said Snarling. "I wish I was clear of this net of the devil's; he'll make a haul of us all, as sure as Mungo was his likeness; what's to be done now, if the brig sends a boat?"

"I scarcely know, and can scarcely collect my senses sufficient to think; fortunately, if they land, they will, in all probability, land on the nearest point; then, without they traverse

the whole island, the schooner will be safe ; but if they venture into the wood, the footsteps of last night's folly may lead them to the cave ; the slaves would soon hail them as liberators ; and joining them, we should be sacrificed. There is the canoe which might save us, and as prudent men, we had better make preparations, by placing some provisions, the mast and sails in the canoe ; go and get her ready, whilst I watch the movement of the brig."

CHAPTER IX.

WHILST Snarling turned his attention to the canoe, as a place of refuge, he had time to think that a residence in Cuba with their former reputations so honorably gained in robbing the conducta at St. Jago, and having a perfect knowledge how expeditiously the Spaniards divested themselves of pirates whenever they fell into their hands, would not be quite so pleasant; and as to going farther in the canoe, that had its difficulties and its dangers, as land where they would, their deeds were recorded, he walked in silence, whilst his thoughts reverted to his past life, his future prospects, his present danger. It is in

moments like these, that the mind runs over years of the past in a second, and at the same time, mirrors the future. Snarling had very little in either state, of consolation; and he would gladly have allowed the oath to escape his memory, if the superstition of a seaman, had not fixed it indelibly there.

The Captain watched with intense anxiety the brig which for ever kept changing her position, as the current in its caprice, or a slight flaw of air swept past her. The boat was at first employed in throwing water over the sides of the brig, a custom common in hot climates. She was then made fast astern, and Albert from his place of concealment, felt a relief incomprehensible, as he saw the last man leave her, and actually heard the pipe to breakfast, which sound he well remembered. He was safe for a minute, but how to turn that moment to advantage. The drunken crew were proof against all attempts to rouse them from their slumbers. His endeavours to awaken the crew to the danger so very near, was ineffectual, and he returned to watch the brig. To his great

astonishment, he saw the boat had shoved off, and was pulling towards the island. There were only five hands in all, four of which, appeared like midshipmen whilst the fifth was in all probability the boat keeper. He ran to Snarling, and summoned him to his side, desiring him to bring muskets and pistols for both; again he made a desperate effort to arouse one, who appeared less drunk than the rest, but failing in all attempts, they concealed the entrance of the cave, by pieces of wood and shrubs, kept for the occasion. The papers of the Jonathan Dobbs were got in readiness, and every other one carefully concealed; all precautions taken, they awaited the arrival of their enemies with as much coolness and caution as was requisite.

The boat pulled direct to the shore, and in a few minutes, the four young men, one of whom was a lieutenant, and each carrying guns, landed. They trod cautiously along the beach, as if tracing the marks of the turtle, which are plentiful in those parts, in order to discover their eggs; but failing in this, they

appeared resolved to dive into the woods. Albert heard them give an order to the boat keeper, that in the event of any signal being hoisted from the brig, to discharge his musket. "Keep a good look out, do you hear, for directly the sea breeze comes down, the signal will be made."

"The sea breeze," murmured Albert, "never comes when it is wanted; there is not a cloud to the eastward, and to-day, the land breeze lasted an hour longer than usual; it will be eleven, three hours more, before we can expect this breeze; creep away, Snarling, to the farthest point, and take care not to be seen."

There would have been but little cause for alarm, had not the impatience of the Captain betrayed them. The midshipmen on arrival in the wood, discovered in the sandy soil, which is plentiful in the Isle of Pines, the mark of a man's foot; "And that," said the youngest, "is fresh, it has been done not five minutes ago."

"Some negroes I suppose, who came over from the main land for turtle?"

"Not so, Sir!" said the forward youngster, "for negroes wear no shoes; and this is the print of rather a genteel foot, such a one, as might walk up the streets of Kingston, and half the blackies in the world would call out, massa buckra wid him lilly foot; see here, Sir, there are the marks of two men!"

The lieutenant looked, and it was decided to trace the foot marks. "You see, Sir," continued the sharp youngster, "these are no turtle hunters, or they would have gone to the beach; they seem to have come thus far—one has advanced ten yards further, then both have retreated; Mc. Coy, you Irish bog trotter, keep your hoof off the track, or you'll tread the four into one, and we shall be all adrift in our search."

A laugh at the Irish boy followed, and the party headed by the youngster, tracked the marks. His tongue was not idle as he walked along; and the conversation, as the unerring track directed them in the pursuit, led them in the steps of Albert; the place were Snarling

had separated was marked. Two followed him, each prepared for action, whilst the lieutenant followed those of Albert. Whenever a hard piece of ground could be found, or a small bush could defend the soil, on it Albert trod; but Snarling intent upon gaining a greater distance, forgot such prudent caution, and in his hurry, rounded a small knoll, from which the schooner was visible. No sooner did the youngster see her than he called out at the top of his shrill voice, that there was a prize in the creek. The Captain heard it, and as the lieutenant turned, he took a more circuitous route, and appeared just over the vessel.

“What the devil have we here?” said the youngster, whose eyes were every where; “why there have been a dozen men here; and here is the exact mark of a musket, and blood enough under this tree, to have floated a jolly boat; even the sand has not swallowed it all, and the stain is evident.”

“Killing a pig, you spalpeen,” said the Irish boy.

"Pig, Paddy, do you think they tie a pig to a tree, to cut its throat with a musket?"

So intent had the party been, that not one had seen Albert, who, concealing himself, left Snarling to pass off the schooner, and manufacture lies as fast as he could. The ends of cartridges which had been bitten off, were found by the youngster; and so closely did he follow like a blood-hound, that he stepped to the grave of the black man, and called attention to the spot where Paddy's pig was buried.

Snarling, observing the shrewdness of this hound of pirates, boldly advanced, and saluted the lieutenant almost before he saw him.

"I calculate," he began, "you're looking after turtle this morning?"

"Halloo!" said the lieutenant, looking up, "what the devil brought you here?"

"My schooner I expect."

"Why, you are no yankee; you are either Robinson of the Swiftsure, or you are his ghost."

"Then," said Snarling with as unchangea-

ble a face as a turtle ; " I expect I'm his ghost, for I'm not him."

The lieutenant still continued to eye him carefully ; and the youngster, who had left the grave to hear the news, cut in, unasked, with his remarks. He was a privileged person, one of those spoilt midshipmen, whose tongue was ever ready with some flippant remark, and who, owing to the indiscrimination of the oldsters, mistook impertinence for wit.

" Halloo, Jonathan," he said, " that jacket of yours was never cut in New York."

" It belonged," replied Snarling, " I calculate, to a Philadelphia lawyer ; a chap who grew so tall, that they cut him in pieces, on account of his impertinence, and I expect you are a walking piece of him."

" Put that in your pipe and smoke it," ejaculated the Irishman.

" Then I took his head for my share, and there's no sense left in America."

Snarling looked at him not much like a quiet American merchant ; his scowl, which manifested a person accustomed to resent in-

juries, rather than bear them, darkened his countenance.

"What schooner is that?" said the lieutenant.

"Mine," said Snarling.

"Don't you know the difference," interrupted the youngster, "between what and whose; I expect, at any rate, you have no Philadelphia lawyer's head."

"I'll try the thickness of yours," said the pirate, rather off his guard.

"Silence, youngster," said the lieutenant.

"I should like to see that yankee doodle put his paw upon me," murmured the youngster, "and I would not be long before I put a ball through him."

Snarling overheard him, he looked at him, as if he could have crushed him, and the prudent part he ought to play was quite forgotten.

"Do you allow your boys to insult a gentleman that way?" he asked.

The youngster burst into a fit of laughter,

at the word gentleman, in which he was joined by the other two, and hardly deserted by the lieutenant, over whose countenance a smile was perceptible ; whilst Snarling, who preferred action rather than words, seemed winding himself up, to take vengeance upon the musquitoe, who, even in his insignificance, so much annoyed him.

“ Let us hear no more of this,” said the lieutenant, who saw the symptoms of hostility in Snarling, and who was quite aware that the schooner had more than one man to navigate her ; indeed the cautious manner in which the crew were concealed, began to alarm the officer ; he was perfectly unprotected, and although his duty led him to examine the schooner, yet he was confident that great prudence was requisite.

As yet, only the masts had been visible ; but as he advanced, and the long, magnificent hull of this beautiful vessel appeared, he became alarmed, lest he should be detained, should she be one of those vessels which had lately committed serious depredations in those seas, and

which rejoiced in the uncomfortable name of pirates. What else could she be? The long gun was visible, the smaller guns were there; thirty men could not have worked her properly; and yet one man alone was visible, and this man, to the eye of the lieutenant, a deserter, whom he recollected himself on board the *Swiftsure*. The manner of Snarling, the bold, resolute daring bearing, convinced him that civility was the best policy. Once on board the brig, he was secure, then indeed the schooner could be entrapped; he therefore prepared to retreat, but in this he was interrupted by the arrival of the Captain, who saluting the lieutenant, begged him to inspect the vessel. The Captain had been close the whole time, and came forward, fearing a discovery if the intruders suddenly returned.

“Aye,” said the youngster, who imagined that no people under the sun dared insult his *Britannic Majesty’s* uniform; “this is the gentleman in the tippy bobby boots, there are at least thirty more of them somewhere.” The lieutenant gave him a look, but the youngster continued to his Irish messmate, “What with

the pig Paddy, the ends of the cartridges, the blood and the grave, I think we have stumbled upon as pretty a prize as ever floated ; and when I'm prize-master, I'll take the shine out of the Philadelphia lawyer there."

"She is the Jonathan Dobbs," said the Captain "and I am her commander, the papers are here, and you can inspect them."

The lieutenant, who was fearful of giving trouble, looked at his watch, and saying, "The breeze will soon be down, I must return on board," was on the point of retracing his steps, when the youngster said, "Come along, Pat, let's see how we'll divide the cabin," and prepared to leap into the vessel, when Snarling caught him by the collar, and turned him round, without the slightest effort, saying: 'When you are ordered on board, young *gentleman* ; then your obedience will be an excuse for your bad manners."

"Wait a little, my yankee skipper," said the youngster, "and I'll dance over those decks without your leave."

The Captain interposed, he was anxious to save time ; he requested the youngster to go on

board, and by way of bravado, he instantly leapt on her decks. She looked longer as he stood on board of her; he could not control his wonder; the tall main-mast raked so much, that its head plumbed the taffrail, whilst the fore-yard seemed long enough to make a frigate the same spar. He said with a kind of enthusiasm; "Here's a vessel, she answers the description of the pirate vessel of St. Jago de Cuba!"

There was a sudden flush suffused the face of the Captain, which did not escape the lieutenant. He called his youngster out of the schooner, and mentioning that the creek was unknown to the generality of vessels, asked merely, as a pretext for saying something, "What was the reason which brought the Jonathan Dobbs into the creek?"

"We sprung our top-mast," replied the Captain, "and seeing the tall pines here, I ventured to cut down one, and to make the mast; it was then we discovered the creek, and I came in for security, whilst my men worked; it saved

me some expense, and gave me an opportunity of caulking her bows; if you step this way, you will see how requisite it was."

"Well," said the youngster out-loud, "I say, Paddy, this is a second nonsuch, two decks and no bottom, five guns and two men; the top-mast is an end, and it's not a new one, but the fore-mast, (I wonder if these two gentlemen cut that out of the wood,) has never yet been greased."

"What an eye you have for an observation," said Snarling, "if you come with me into the wood, I'll show you the top-mast, that's the sprung one."

There was no inclination on the part of the youngster to accept this civil invitation; for at that moment the musket of the boatmen was heard. "There's the signal," said the lieutenant, "we must go back."

"You will find this a shorter way," said Snarling, as he volunteered to lead them a complete round.

"I fancy your shoes are a good track," said

the youngster, "we came here by that guide, and we had better go back by the same pilot."

"As you wish," said the Captain, and he followed the guide in the person of the midshipman. As he passed the trees, he said; "I wonder if burying pigs makes the pork better." He was considered a licensed talker; no one noticed the remark, but as the party drew away from the schooner, their pace was quickened; not a word was spoken, excepting by the youngster, who kept up a fire of his wit at his messmates, every now and then pointing to the print of Snarling's gentlemanly foot-mark, and gaining courage as he neared his boat, he remarked, "That for boots, they certainly were as much like the bottom of a scrubbing brush, as any covering for feet he had ever seen."

On gaining sight of the boat, the Captain and Snarling took their departure; they hastily retreated to the cave, whilst the youngster, now no longer controlled in the slightest man-

ner, declared the vessel a pirate, and the crew afraid to appear.

"We will soon be after her, at any rate," said the lieutenant, "directly the sea breeze comes down, and the clouds are showing in some force to the eastward, we must not lose a moment." Her sails were bent, "and as to catching such a clipper as that in any breeze—"

"A turtle," said the youngster, "in search of an Italian greyhound."

"Now then, give way, youngster, come and steer; we must not do like midshipmen fatigued, keep looking how much farther we have to pull, but as prize money is dear to us, and pirates most enviable prizes, we must pull like Britons."

The time consumed on the island, by the ingenuity of Albert, had tended to restore some of the drunkards to a greater disposition to wakefulness, and the rough manner in which they were handled by Snarling, and the Captain, made ten of them sufficiently awake

to stagger to the schooner. The first object was to get to sea, for when she was gone, the brig would be led away in pursuit, and the nest of hornets would remain undisturbed. The rest of the crew were carried to the schooner, and in spite of being dipped in the water alongside, continued dead drunk, and incapable of being aroused to any action.

The termination of the creek was in the centre of the island, where, around the anchorage, the tall pines shot up far beyond the height of the schooner's mast, and there secure from all winds, the Spitfire remained unseen from the sea, and scarcely perceptible, even when close on board of her. There was not now a breath of wind—the crew were all on board, and the elder pirates left in possession of their cave, quite unable to make any defence in the event of an attack.

A good look out was kept on the boat—she had at least, three miles to pull, and three miles to young gentlemen, whose hands are not much accustomed to such hard work, was a

distance not so easily performed. In spite of all the injunctions of the lieutenant, the crew did look to the distance they had to achieve, but their spirits were high ; there was a suspicious vessel close to them ; prize money was gleaming before their eyes, and promotion might be the result of an instant attack.

Most anxiously the Captain watched the proceeding on board the brig. The schooner was warped to the entrance of the creek, even here she was concealed, and although her sails were loosened, and the vessel only held by a hawser, yet the pines which grow nearly to the very water's edge, concealed her. The Captain had placed himself behind one of the trees with his glass, and his vigilance was soon rewarded ; the yards of the brig, which had been braced up on the starboard tack, were now squared, and a boat was soon swinging in the tackles, and hoisted out ; at this, he smiled in derision ; but suddenly recollecting the state of his crew, he became seriously alarmed. Snarling came and reported the Spitfire in as perfect

readiness, for any event, as she could be made. "What's in the wind now, Sir?" asked Snarling.

"She is hoisting her boats out, and even now there is the carriage of the boat's gun going into her launch."

"I think," said Snarling, "she had better leave that alone, for long Tom of ours will soon set all those boys swimming, and in this nice calm day we have plenty of sharks at hand to save us making prisoners."

"This day, Snarling, is the most sorrowful of my existence; I am pledged by an oath too solemn to break, and too cautiously worded to evade, to use my utmost endeavours to save the schooner, and protect the crew; I would as soon die, as fire upon that boat, and if I could, at this trying moment, escape in the canoe without compromising myself, most gladly would I avail myself of the shelter, almost hopeless as it is."

"Upon this occasion," said Snarling, "I would just as soon rid myself of the unpleasant

remembrance of the lieutenant;—he has too good a memory to be a good neighbour. What are they at now?"

"There's the gun in the slings; the quarter boats are down, and there are now four boats in all; we have no time to lose, we must cast off the schooner, and sweep her as far as we can between the island and the main land; if a breeze comes, we can work to windward through the narrow passage, whilst any attempt to follow us there, would be the loss of the brig."

"But supposing the sea breeze should not come down in spite of the appearance of those clouds, we are then caught by the boats."

"If obliged to defend ourselves, we shall be enabled so to do, and in the event of a defeat, we must seek shelter on the Island of Cuba. I have no fear of the sea breeze, although it is late to-day; even now, I see it on the horizon; long before the boats can reach us, it will be down. Come to our work, Snarling, and I most sincerely hope that we may not be obliged to resort to arms; see, even the Captain of an

English man of war brig may make a mistake which will allow his adversary to escape : his boats will be half way on shore, before the breeze comes, and whilst he heaves to, to hoist them in again, we shall show him how long are our legs, and how quickly we can use them."

The Spitfire now cast off, and was towed clear of the creek. When she resorted to her sweeps, she was within three miles of the brig, and both vessels were in sight of each other. As she came round the point, and became visible, an unusual activity seemed to prevail on board of her pursuer ; the boats were sent ahead, and the brig's bow towed round towards the island, whilst the men were seen descending the side, into the launch ; shortly, her four boats cast off, and taking the launch in tow, they made towards the schooner.

It was not until this moment, that any hasty expression escaped the schooner's Captain ; had his crew been sober, he would have swept her nearly as fast as the boats pulled ; but now, he only weakened the already half exhausted men, who still hovered between drunkenness and so-

briety. Directly, the Spitfire was clear of the island, so as to take the sea breeze when it came down, the sweeps were abandoned, and the vessel prepared for action.

By this time, all the crew were awakened : but half were worse than useless, as they reeled about in all the lassitude and discontent of returning sobriety. The rest, about twenty in all, were alive to the danger that awaited them; half an hour would bring their enemies alongside ; more numerous than themselves, cheered on by an officer, whose promotion would reward his bravery;—anxious, and eager for the contest, with assistance at hand, and with comrades who watched the result; on the other hand was the hope of escape—the long catalogue of unatoned crimes, half unmanned the timid pirate ; all around was hostile ; at sea, the brig on shore, the plundered inhabitants of Cuba ; despair prompted resistance ; a certain death was the result of their capture ; the youngster's remark as to the description of the schooner, was a proof that her character

was justly estimated, and the pirate's usual desperate conduct was necessary, for death was close on board of him.

"It's merely the cloud beneath the sun, that makes the horizon dark," said Snarling, with the utmost indifference, as he stood by his Captain; "there's not enough wind out there to shake a lady's curl. What's to be done now?"

The Captain looked at him, as he said, with much energy, "I hope the first shot may hit me;—I would rather die than fire upon them; but I would rather do that, than meet a death which awaits us all at Jamaica."

"I'm not afraid of that, Sir; they would not take the pride of the sea in four hours, in those boats; all we have got to do, is to give our men a little spirits, just enough to wind them up a bit, and just let me catch that Philadelphia lawyer, and his mother shall have his ears sent home in a brown paper parcel. Shall we trice up the boarding nettings, and give them a gun to let them know, that long

Tom reaches a few yards beyond two miles?
We must fight, Sir. The oath, remember the
oath."

CHAPTER X.

THE boats now approached rapidly, and the sea breeze, if it was the breeze to windward, remained stationary; it certainly never neared the schooner, although it looked black and cloudy to windward, and aloft the little clouds swept away hastily to the westward.

"It is a fearful alternative," said the Captain; "but I am like a bear hemmed in by its hunters, I must either die unresistingly, or make one desperate effort at escape; it is over, all my pride of birth gives way to the fear of death. We will defend the schooner and fight."

Snarling looked up with great surprise, and said coolly, "Fight! was there ever any doubt about that? I expect not, as the young-

ster would say. I have taken a good swig of your humanity draught ; that half and half spirit and water mixture, which we talk over when the tide of danger is out, but now that it's flood tide of that unwelcome commodity, and the gentleman with the black cap and the rope's end within hail, I'm blessed if I swing without a struggle ; besides," continued this amphibious creature, " I should like to prove to young Philadelphia there, who is squeaking out to his men to come and hang us, that I've sense enough to know, that the longer I live, the more likely I am to have time to repent. There's cast off."

The boats had now got within a mile, when they cast off the tow, and appeared to make two divisions ; the launch and the jolly boat seemed inclined to make an attack on the starboard and the cutter and the gig on the larboard quarter ; having done this, they gave three cheers, in which the youngster's voice was heard above the rest ; for a woman's scream and a boy's squeak reach as far as the shot, whilst the grumble of the explosion in a

.

stiff breeze is hardly heard by the man who fired the gun.

"They hunt me to despair," said the Captain to himself; "the voice of mercy would be stilled in my behalf, and the degradation of a public execution I can never abide. I have not shed one drop of blood in my own defence, or for my own fortune. There is no alternative now; our preparations may daunt, whilst our inactivity may tempt them. I feel clogged to my oath; these men would die for me, I must at least defend them. Fire the long gun, Snarling, over them."

"Aye, aye, Sir; I'll see how near I can drop it to the Philadelphia lawyer;" and strange it was, that even then Snarling felt more anxious for vengeance on the boy than he feared the coming host of seamen. The shot fell so close to the gig that for a moment the crew rested on their oars.

"They are wiping the spray off their rosy cheeks," said Snarling. "I'll give them a bath yet, and save them the trouble of drying their clothes."

The schooner kept her bow sweeps out, and

presented her broadside to the coming foe. As the boats endeavoured to get on her quarter, the Spitfire's head was easily turned and the fatigue rendered greater to the assailants; they were now well within half a mile, and a couple of marines in the launch began to open a fire of musketry, directed principally aloft and with the hope of cutting away some of the rigging, so that, in the event of the breeze, the brig might gain upon the chase, before she could repair her damages.

The Captain now mustered his men, the danger had aroused them all; they had armed themselves for the fight, and there was a spirit of determination, coolness and contempt, visible amongst this selected crew which satisfied their Captain, that the boats had but a bad chance.

"Now then, young Philadelphia," said Snarling. "I dare say you have often played at cricket; catch this ball." The gun was fired and the gig sunk, the cutter instantly backed round to save the men, and the launch and the jolly boat laid on their oars, until they could proceed with the cutter.

Snarling took the glass and amused himself

with his remarks, as the crew of the gig were lugged into the cutter. "Now's our time," he said, "we might feed half the sharks in the seas this morning, if sinking such a set of ragamuffins could benefit us. Whew! if they don't fire their carronade better than that in the launch, we might pipe to dinner, and not one shot would decrease the number of our mess."

"The brig has got the sea breeze," said the Captain, as he watched the increase of sail which was soon crowded, "and now comes our chance; if that carronade should wound a lower mast, we must be taken; for the brig will be close on board of us, before we can catch the breeze."

"They are a gallant set of fellows in the boats," said Snarling; "in spite of the example of the swim, see how they come on, and there's young Philadelphia flourishing his cheese-toaster, as if he would spit us all. They'll be alongside now before the breeze comes."

"I would rather not fire any more, Snarling. I think we might get away without any blood-

shed yet, have every thing ready to crowd all sail; that brig makes too much foam about the bows to be much of a clipper, but the cursed breeze seems hardly to keep half a mile a head of her."

"It never rains, but it pours," said Snarling, "and misfortunes come down like hail stones when they begin. I'm blessed if there ain't the niggers got adrift from the cave waving a flag to the boats, there's an end to our anchorage; and as to the senior officers, every man will dangle to cocoa nut trees, and swing about in the sea breeze like bundles of dirty clothes."

"One part of the oath," said Albert, "will be absolved, and thus we shall be relieved from the necessity of returning to this place, which, from this day, will be examined by every cruizer in these seas."

"Did you ever see a set of niggers on a holiday, making such a row as those fellows. Why as I'm alive they have got old Jones with a rope round his neck! I suspect they are going to pay him off for the liberty our crew took with Mungo. It's all up in that quarter,

there'll be death enough on the island, without our going back to swell the numbers; Lord love those fellows in that launch, they would not hit a church in an hour; that's five shots they have fired and not one hit, they are coming close enough now."

The voices of the gallant fellows, as they pulled towards their superior in force, was now distinctly heard. They saw the approaching breeze and they struggled to gain their prize, before the presence of the brig should rob them of half the honour. A light air had caught the schooner, which now had steerage way upon her; as the light flaws of wind heralded the stronger breeze, the crews of the boats redoubled their efforts and were within half pistol shot. Snarling kept his eye upon them, over the taffrail, and when he saw the youngster draw a pistol to take a shot, he raised himself up and allowed a fair mark; the ball whizzed close by his ear. "Now it's my turn, young lawyer," he called out, as he drew his pistol: the gallant little fellow heard him

distinctly, for they were close under the stern; he took a steady aim and was on the point of firing, when the Captain knocked the pistol in the air, saying: "Take no revenge on a boy, we are safe; although within four boat-hooks length of us, they will never touch us; hurrah, the breeze has caught us aloft."

Had the launch, when the breeze was observed to have caught the schooner, given up the useless hope of catching her and had contented herself with firing her carronade at the rigging, some mischief might have been done; but hope scarcely ever flags when promotion is in sight. The gallant officer urged his crew to redoubled efforts; they pulled as only British seamen pull in such desperate enterprizes; the eye of expectation failed to see the increasing distance of the schooner, until at last even hope dwindled and the carronade was resorted to, but entirely without effect for each shot verified the old saying, 'the more haste the less speed.' The gun was no sooner loaded, than it was fired without much aim, and the

Spitfire having caught the strength of the breeze, was now running to leeward under all her canvass, untouched even by the long nine pounders of the brig, which passed over and over her.

But the Captain had calculated rightly ; it was now useless persevering in the chase ; the schooner soon showed her superiority of sailing ; the brig overtook her boats, and in order to hoist them in, it was requisite to heave to.

No sooner was this done than the schooner hove to also ; she was about half a mile out of shot, and hoisted American colours ; her object was now to watch the motions of the brig, secure in her decided superiority. She ran but little risk by this apparent imprudence, the Captain being resolved if possible, to act up to the purport of the oath, which bound the crew of the Spitfire to the assistance of their comrades in every manner, within the range of possibility.

The brig soon stood close in shore, and her boats were seen to land. It was now evident that the nest, or the retreat of the pirates must

be discovered ; there was no possibility of resistance, the schooner therefore made sail, and hauling close on a wind, manifested an intention of getting to windward of the island ; but observing that the brig, when her boats returned, still hovered about under her easy sail, she bore up and ran away towards the gulf of Mexico. She was soon out of sight to leeward, when shortening sail, she kept close under the land of Cuba, and hauled close on a wind ; resolved once more to visit the island, and to remove some bags of money, which, in their store holes, might have eluded the search of the brig ; besides which, it was most requisite to learn the fate of their companions, and seek another asylum for the future.

About six in the evening, the sea breeze died away, and by seven, the Spitfire was creeping along close to the shore, favoured by the land breeze ; at the close of day, there was nothing in sight, and the Isle of Pines was on the starboard bow ; by two in the morning, the boat was sent with orders, not on any account to land near the creek, but cautiously

to explore the island, landing at a point, furthest removed from the cave. This ticklish duty was confided to Snarling; his men were armed, and discretion urged as strongly requisite; for simple as the affair appeared, it was not without much danger and much difficulty. The Spitfire hove to between the island and the main land, keeping close in shore, and under the smallest sail.

It was a night of much anxiety to her Captain; the only spot on the whole earth to which he could, unmolested, have retired, was perhaps discovered; and those who had passed a youth of crime, in which murder, theft and spoliation were reckoned, surprized. Here the pirate died of lingering age, at least free from the apprehension of the law; and here on an almost desert island, the youth of crime might be atoned by an age of patience and prayer. It was the only refuge for the wandering bark which seemed outlawed from every nation; she was the wild bird chased from every shore, and like the sea gull, made her home upon the waters; one only spot

was a haven to her, and that was now perhaps discovered.

With the recklessness of men accustomed to desperate deeds, the boat's crew indulging in their usual levity, left the schooner. Snarling promised himself some recreation if the Philadelphia lawyer fell into his hands ; and the rest who felt the cave their only safe home, vowed undisguised vengeance against any intruders. This was merely vented alongside, for when they shoved off, the muffled oar, the cautious stroke, glided the silent boat to her destination ; as they approached the shore, not a word was spoken, the oars were barely lifted above the surface of the water, and then dipped silently again, avoiding as much as possible, the phosphorescent appearance which the slightest movement on the surface occasioned ; at last the boat's keel grated upon the sand ; all but two landed ; they were desired to keep her afloat, and sufficiently far off, to prevent any one suddenly seizing her bow, and making a prize of her.

Snarling, as far as his nautical talents were concerned, was an able seaman in every sense of the word; he was an adept at a surprise, or at plundering a church, or robbing a conducta of mules; but he had never commanded one of those silent parties, where so much discretion and caution are required; instead of advancing too stealthily, all hands went on together, cautiously it is true, but not with that prudent concealment which was so requisite. The moon was bright, the stars, like so many lamps, illumined the heavens, and objects were discernible when clear of the trees, at any great distance. One of the crew hinted, that the obscurity of the wood would enable them to reach the cave undiscovered; others hinted, that the brig was far away, and that they might sing a song, with the lungs of a boatswain, and not disturb any thing but the turtle; another suggested, the open ground as least liable to impede their progress, whilst another laughed at all danger, and recommended getting over the business with the greatest dispatch.

In the multitude of counsellors, there is wisdom we are told; but to a wavering mind, there is no calamity greater than in listening to the tongues of many, each eager to advocate his own views; the waverer is swayed to and fro, as each man states his reason, and generally resigns himself to the voice of his friend, although that friend could flatter but not advise.

Snarling was a man prompt in action, when the object was visible before him; one who always relied more upon force and boldness, than stratagem, a despiser of danger, one desperate as a wounded tiger, without that animal's cunning in concealment; he therefore fell into the hint given by him who was for the more speedy arrival at their end, although they walked in the open moonlight; this being resolved upon, the crew advanced all in a cluster, and just as evident to any one expecting such a visitation, as if it was done in broad daylight.

As they advanced towards the cave, and as

they glanced their eyes along the creek, they became less reserved, and talked aloud.

"There's no boat there," said one; "we have it all our own way, and the sooner we finish the business the better."

"Shove ahead for the cave," said another.

"If the rest of our companions, and the blacks are gone, we know the worst," said Snarling; "and then the sooner we get up the bags of dollars and doubloons the better. Here we are, now for it."

"Spitfire!" said Snarling, as he gave a signal, the one always used to awake the attention of the pirates; there was no answer.

"Strike a light, shipmate, and let's see the worst of it," said Snarling. "Now then, lads, one and all into the cave;" the lantern, which had been brought for the occasion, was lighted, and in obedience to the order, all descended into the opening, all equally anxious to save what they themselves had concealed.

The cave at first, was long, narrow and low,

but after about forty feet had been passed, it opened into a spacious place, for which several excavations had been made by the pirates of former days, when the West Indies was infested by the buccaneers, and when the Island of Pines was their principal resort ; these had been enlarged by succeeding adventurers, and at last had been finished, and brought to some degree of comfort ; from these places of concealment for powder, ammunition, gold, provisions, and arms had been made, and most of the openings were kept so cautiously closed, that few would have made the discovery ; the island in fact, was worked as regularly under ground as a wasp's nest ; for it had been the resort of pirates from their earliest date, and each improved the work of their predecessor.

There was no soul in the cave to welcome the men, who, true to their oaths, had come to succour, and to save ; each part was rummaged, in vain. The voice of the pirates re-echoed along the excavation ; there was no reply ; in one corner, a number of small pieces of the pine tree, split into long sticks, and used as

candles, was discovered; each man instantly procured a light, and the scene of the last night's carouse was again illumined; bottles and glasses were thrown about; the remnant of the supper still remained, and the whole presented a view of a cave, after a multitude had feasted therein. It was now determined to examine every stow hole of the retreat, and it was evident not one of these had been found out. There, untouched, as a trifling quantity of earth was removed, lay the wealth of the pirates. Bags of dubloons, and boxes of dollars; gold coins of each nation; silver, copper, and paper monies of all sorts and descriptions, in large quantities were drawn forth, and placed in the large cave, ready for removal.

The magazine and store of arms were found likewise untouched, and the casks of powder were rolled nearer to the mouth of the cave, away from the lights; they had more than the boat could carry at one trip, and haste was requisite to make two before the morning dawned. Another cell produced boxes of clothes, containing, from the garb of a monk, to

the dress of a mountebank ; they were thrown about in wild confusion, whilst the cellar, affording, as it did, a plentiful supply was resorted to, by those who required stimulants to exertion ; but of all the produce of the cave, the money and the powder was the most valuable, and these were the first to be removed.

On a closer examination, a pistol was found which had evidently belonged to an officer of the brig, and in another corner was the dirk of the young midshipman. Snarling looked at this, and recognised it; a bitter smile came over his countenance, and he vowed a secret vengeance against the unfledged boy, who had hurt him more by his words than the dirk could have done. "Now, lads," he said, "let's have a glass each, and then to work ; the best plan will be, to bring the boat into the creek, close up to the cave, and then we shall soon ship our stores, and be off to another part of the world."

The crew worked hard, and the proposition was received with considerable applause. Some bottles of old brandy were produced,

and some glasses speedily supplied; but as the weather was hot, it was proposed by Snarling, that nothing stronger than half and half should be taken; it was agreed to, and one of the youngest was desired to go to the well for some water. These wells being made by sinking a cask with small holes in the bottom of it, in the sand near the shore; whether the water thus procured, is a filtration from the sea, or an oozing of a deep underground spring, for shallow springs are rarely found, is undecided; but it is a mode by which ships are supplied with water, in many places of the world. A pitcher, which had long been used for the occasion, was given, and he started to the aperture on his mission, whilst the rest sat round the table preparing their glasses. It was but a minute, and the trembling pirate stood amongst them, having dropped the pitcher from his hand; he could not speak, but his blanched cheek and quivering lip, announced some unusual panic.

“What is it?” said Snarling, as he jumped

from his seat, and drew his cutlass, "speak man !"

"Can't you drop a word, *a word* Sam?" said another, with consummate coolness, "just as quickly as you dropped the pitcher."

The trembling pirate placed his finger to his lips, and in the expression of his countenance, the necessity of silence was urged ; his hands, like those of a palsied man, gave the lips a tremulous motion, and the fear became universal ; with his right hand, he pointed to the mouth of the cave, and then struggling within himself as if to whisper, his voice broke through the restraint, and he said "The mouth is choked up."

"Hell, and the devil," said Snarling "speak, man ; what do you mean?"

"The cave is closed, and I heard voices in whispers, round the entrance."

There was one universal shudder, and Snarling's signal for silence, was obeyed by those who feared to speak ; the lights were removed to one of the passages above mentioned, and the mate himself crept cautiously to the

mouth ; it was too true ; large trees which had previously been cut down, and sawed to fit the entrance, were placed across, whilst upright held these securely in their place ; the moon's ray was sufficient to show the imprisoned pirate the impossibility of forcing an outlet ; whilst the entrance was guarded by only two men, for only one could advance at a time from the cavern, and that in a bent position he listened, and he heard the voice of the youngster, whose cunning had prepared the trap for them.

" We have them now," he said, " like a nest of hornets, with the hole stopped up, and now we are all ready for them—we had better give the alarm at once. Have they secured their boat ?"

" Randall is just returned, he has got the boat, and the two men, who were left in it. The boat has been scuttled according to the lieutenant's orders, who will be here in a minute."

" I think my friend in the box there," said the youngster, " will remember the Philadelphia lawyer as long as he lives, which will be about half an hour from this date. We'll

smoke them like wasps ; I was always a capital hand at that when at school."

Snarling's return with the intelligence only magnified the apprehensions before entertained ; there was no possible outlet, and it now was too evident, that in walking along in the bright moonlight they had been watched, and allowed to enter the cave, and from the manner in which it was blocked up, it was likewise evident that the wood had been prepared during the day, and every precaution taken to insure the capture of the pirates that the crew of the brig had cautiously concealed themselves, and now superior in strength, and in position, they were laughing at their own success.

"There's only one thing left for it," said Snarling, whose whole mind was running on the ruin of the midshipman, more than his own safety ; "and that's done as quickly as the screw killed Carlos. We are left the choice of two deaths, for as to escape, that is out of the power of even ourselves."

"Don't let's be in a hurry," said the cool gentleman ; "I remember a parson in England

who always said, 'sufficient for the day, is the evil thereof!' and that being the case, let us see what can be done; now, there's an animal, they call a mole, which works its way up, or down in the earth, and I'm a thinking, that if we were to begin with a good will, we might get out of this uncomfortable fix, as Jonathan says, without giving young Philadelphia the trouble of removing his blockading trees. Give us that bottle, Sam, and don't be shivering, and changing colour, like a dying dolphin?"

"Where, and how are we to begin?" said Snarling.

"At the further end of the cave," replied the first man; "and whilst those gentlemen are watching for us at the entrance, we'll creep out at the back door."

"But the boat is taken and scuttled."

"All the better, because then we must fight the harder; come along, lads."

It was evident that the plan proposed could never succeed; the cave ran downwards from its mouth, with a gentle, but regular inclina-

tion, whilst above, it was known to all, the ground gradually rose; the attempt was made, but it was soon relinquished, for a long iron was driven with continued strokes in an upward direction, several feet; it was evident, from the increased strength required to force it onward, that it had not perforated entirely through, and although it was relinquished at one point, it was tried at another with apparently less success; but another affair soon drew their attention from their undertaking, it was the squeaking voice of the youngster, which being more shrill than that of the older person, reached the furthest point, at which the pirates were at work.

"Now," said Snarling, "what is to be done, do we surrender, or do we resist to the last?"

"Why, we can but surrender after all," said the cool seaman; "we have provisions enough for a month, or a year, and we have wine by dozens; hold on, to be sure, if we have nothing left but our eye lashes, to cling with; although we have failed here, we may yet suc-

ceed elsewhere. Take no notice of the squeaker. Hand here that iron rod, and let us try again, in the opposite direction."

The crew of the brig having secured the two pirates, and destroyed the boat, now began to think of decisive measures, in regard to the people in the cave; only a few were kept at its mouth, as it was impossible to force an exit there; the rest were dispersed within a short distance of each other, to listen if any attempt were made to force an egress elsewhere.

"I say," began Snarling, to the cool man, "I want to speak a word with you before we part; just a whisper over this wine."

"I'm your man," replied the other, "let's have it, clear off the reel."

This attracted the attention of the rest; Snarling and his companion were earnest in their remarks, until the latter starting up, and banging his hand against the table, said, "There's not your equal for boldness, Snarling, in all the world, and America besides; we'll do it, and the sooner we set about it the better,

for if we do it at all, it must be before daylight."

"Better say nothing about it, until the last moment, Bill."

"Certainly not, replied the sailor, "half the world are scared at an open declaration, whilst the other half face twenty times the danger when it is wrapped up in a secret. Here, my lads, let's blockade them out, roll the powder casks as gently as you can towards the mouth of the cave, never mind a shot; get them close up, and we'll barricade them out, and then have a jollification."

The order was speedily obeyed, and the smallest barrels were carried, and safely deposited about six feet from the orifice of the cave; one being placed upon the other, until the aperture was completely stopped; the pirates then retreated into one of the passages, and began to think of their situation; whilst employed, they viewed it not with the apprehension which it merited; now released from labour, they saw themselves engaged—secured.

Snarling was the only one absent; the cool sailor talked to his comrades of hair breadth escapes, and laughed at the present difficulty, as one sure to be overcome; "Its only one struggle, and we shall be free, so let us see ourselves well armed, and ready for the fight." Each man's pistols were examined, the balls were drawn and cut into four pieces, as being more destructive in close quarters; the cutlasses were looked to, and all hands declared themselves ready when Snarling appeared.

"Now, my lads, the halter, or the Spitfire, a gaol, or freedom. Are you ready for a rush?"

Each answered, "ready," and each asked "how they were to make a rush, or who was to lead?"

"We'll all go together," said Snarling, "but I must have Philadelphia Bill, that youngster's more hateful to me, than a hundred men."

"What! do you think about a boy, who could scarcely harm you, if you let him poke at you for a fortnight?"

"Why do people feel more hurt, Bill, if a

fool says a sharp thing, than if it came from a clever fellow?"

"Can't say, shipmate."

"A musquitoe," said Snarling, "stings sharper than a big blue bottle can bite. Are you ready, lads?"

"All ready."

"When you hear a noise loud enough to startle you, make a rush to the mouth of the cave, and then every man for himself, and God for us all."

It never occurred to any of these men, the mockery of calling on *Him* for assistance, when their object was blood and slaughter. More enlightened people than seamen fall into the same extravagance, and pray that the Omnipotent power may *fight* on their side.

"We are all ready," said Snarling, as he advanced as near to the powder barrels as he could, and spoke as loudly as he was able to "Surrender on terms?"

"Terms!" said the youngster, whose gallantry and readiness, made him a favorite, "I suppose a choice of smoking, or hanging."

"We give no terms," said the lieutenant

interrupting, "you are our prisoner, and your delaying to surrender, will not make your capture one jot the less certain."

"We'll dig you out of the earth like wasps," said the youngster, "and give your eggs to fatten the chickens."

"Then," continued Snarling, "you refuse to let us go free, even if we put enormous wealth in your hands?"

"Well, Sir!" said the youngster, "that is an insult, that the hangman can only revenge; it is an insult to our senses, as well as to our honour; if the money is there, we shall find it, and no thanks to them; so that the second insult of the bribery and corruption, merges into the first."

"Don't talk so fast, youngster; tell him again, that we have no terms to offer, and that an unconditional surrender, will save bloodshed, and leave them at the last hour some small praise."

"Aye, aye Sir! do you hear yon chap in the cave? The lieutenant says, that the only terms he can offer you are these, either to hang yourselves down there, or to be hung at

Jamaica ; and as it is a matter of no importance to us, if the worms or the birds pick at your carcasses, you may take your choice."

Scarcely had the youngster finished his interpretation of his orders, when Snarling calling out to his men to be in readiness, grasped a lighted pine stick, a second afterwards, a dreadful explosion occurred ; the mouth of the cave was enlarged more than thirty feet ; the earth was thrown aloft in the air, and fell far away at sea ; the roots of the tall pines, the growth of years were torn from their firm hold, the long stems were hurled in various directions, and the shrivelled skeletons of human beings, blackened, scorched, disfigured ; fell headlong like arrows into the deep. The whole island shook ; the sound of the dreadful explosion reverberated along the shores of Cuba ; a sudden calm prevailed, as if nature held her breath with alarm, and the noise of fallen stones, huge trees, or heavy spars alone disturbed the death-like horror of the moment.

Not a man issued from the cave ; the death they merited from the law, they inflicted upon

themselves ; fifty times the quantity of powder requisite for the consummation of their plot had been used ; the earth, at the surface near the aperture, was blown far, far away ; whilst the instantaneous concussion, produced by the explosion, rent the earth from the interior of the cave, and buried the pirates beneath its enormous weight.

They might have struggled for a moment, but there remained by the side of their ill-gotten wealth, the bodies of the thieves ; and there, not far from the cave, was disinterred by the rude shock, as a kind of evidence against the murderers, the corpse of the poor black slave.

Only one voice was heard, and it the next day recorded the fact. " That blow up," said a young shrill tone, " would have puzzled any but a Philadelphia lawyer."

CHAPTER XI.

"THE time is nearly expired," said Mr. Law, as he sat by the side of Laura Mackenzie; "five months and three weeks have elapsed, since the date of his letter; in another week, the mystery will be unravelled, or we shall read from his will, the secrets of his heart."

"I shiver with cold," said Laura, as she drew nearer the fire, "this dark, windy, gusty night, is well chosen to speak of deaths and wills!"

"It is sometimes difficult to begin a conversation, fair lady; some find a snuff box a good preface; others talk of the weather, others more absent, or forgetful of former, friendships; inquire particularly after the

health of a person, who had been buried a year, and almost forgotten six months ; but with us the ice is broken, the subject broached ; and as it must be discussed, the sooner we do it with the least expenditure of words the better."

"Then talk of his return, his probable return, as with one exception he has been faithful to his word ; teach me to trust in that, speak of him kindly, and encourage that hope, which is the solace of my existence !"

"I don't think, Miss Laura, that all these words would be necessary in a marriage settlement."

"Nonsense, Mr. Law," said Laura, as she allowed her hand to remain in his grasp ; "you are my best, my only friend—oh, what should I have done, if you had forsaken me ?"

"There is One above, who protects the innocent, and shields the orphan : but to our business ; in a week's time that parcel must be opened."

"Not if he comes back—and return he will !" interrupted the impassioned girl.

"I'm quite aware of that, girl, you might have saved your breath; if he comes back, all the papers go to the housemaid to light the fires; but if he does not, and the time is short, we must look on him as dead, and Sir Albert de Lancy will never have a slab in the church to record his name, without you or I put it there."

"Sir Albert de Lancy!" muttered Laura, "his brother is not dead, as he has a son?"

"Thank you for this information, your news is particularly fresh to night: but I repeat, no, that's a waste of words, but what I said would be the case."

"Do not be angry with me, Mr. Law," said Laura, as a tear startled in her eye.

"Angry! you angel, not I; it is an office, which habit makes me answer now and then rather rudely; for when I first rose in my profession, I had a clerk who never could relate a fact, without encumbering it with so much extraneous matter, that it took my mind half an hour to unload the subject of what never belonged to it; this made me hasty, and perhaps my custom of reproach, when one leaves

the subject in discussion, makes me ruder than I am by nature. If I were a member in the house of commons, I should always be called to order : there they waste more time upon frivolities than a nursery load of girls surrounded by twopenny toys, and the last thing they talk of is the subject of discussion."

"How the wind howls, and the rain patters against the windows ; how I pity the sailor, who, exposed to the inclemency of such weather, feels doubly the horror of his situation from the remembrance of happier days, and a warmer habitation !"

"Aye, aye, Miss Laura, if Albert had not been a sailor, you would have let that wind whistle without a remark, and left all the sailors of England to be wrecked without a sigh. But, to our point ; are you prepared to bear the idea that Sir Albert de Lancy is dead, if he does not return to the day ?"

"I will never believe it until the fact is too evident to be doubted, or years have passed and the sea never betrayed its secret. Why be rigid as to the day ? Give him another month,

believe me, Mr. Law, he will return ;—the wind, perhaps, has been treacherous, some trifling occurrence might have detained him in port or even now his vessel might be in security in some neighbouring harbour, protected from this dreadful storm.”

“ Or—”

“ Or,” interrupted Laura, “she may be wrecked ; do not you say so ? for you seem to look into events with a kind of prophetic eye.”

“ You are a wonder of constancy, Laura, and should stand alone, apart from your sex ; such feelings of yours must not be dulled, such hopes must not be blighted, we will talk no more about it, excepting as far as regards those papers. His injunctions relative to them are positive, and I dare not disobey them ; but you have one consolation, although I consider him dead, it is no reason he should be so and that being disposed of, let us talk about your own affairs. In the first place, a reconciliation has taken place between your uncle and ourselves : he has relinquished all claims upon the

estate, on a promise on our parts, that a sum of ten thousand pounds should be settled immediately upon his son, a midshipman in the West Indies, and a boy of much promise; this lad has had a miraculous escape from an explosion occasioned by some pirates, and is on his return home, having suffered much from the hurt he received; it appears every man was killed but himself—fever followed the explosion, and the boy has been sent home for the recovery of his health. I yielded to this proposition on your part; in the first place, under your own instructions, to give almost all, rather than your uncle should expose himself by going into court, where he must not only be beaten, but would render himself odious from his desire to leave one so generous as yourself in poverty, and secondly, from his giving up every part of the money himself, for the sake of his child. This last gave me some hopes, that he had been urged on from the knowledge, that the boy would be left in slender circumstances, had the father died. I could not but applaud the feeling which

prompted even the cruelty to you; these parchments are merely the deeds conveying the money to the trustees, which you are to sign if my arrangement meets your approval."

"Give me a pen, I needed not this *long* explanation, from one so coy of his words. Whatever you *think* is best, that I will always do, but I have a request to make, that my uncle may visit me, with his son, and that the terms I exact for complying in this matter, are, that the subject is never alluded to, and that one expression of thanks violates the contract."

"Generous little devil," said Law, muttering between his teeth, "there, this is one of the spirits sent on earth to wean men from their devotion, and lead them into idolatry."

"What's that fine speech, my dear friend?"

"You must have a witness before you sign that parchment. I'm afraid the wind has given me cold, for my eyes feel very heavy."

"Never mind your cold, it will save you

from seeing too plainly any idol in any shrine ; let us sign this parchment, my mind will be happier when this good uncle of mine finds his son in affluence."

Mr. Law's clerk was called in ; he knew his master too well to say a word, he spread out the deed, whilst Mr. Law amused himself with a pocket handkerchief, and gave sundry indications of a very sudden cold, by blowing his nose, wiping his eyes, and endeavouring to get up a cough. The clerk pointed out the place of signature, and in a moment Laura dashed her name ; it was properly attested, and the deed removed, when Laura, throwing her arms round the neck of her legal adviser, gave him a kiss, and said, "There's your fee, as far as regards my heart ; if *he* could but return before the time, I should be the happiest girl in England."

"I should have said you were the best, if you had not kissed me ; gads, my life, I feel almost young again, myself, and now, that our work is done, we will have some tea, and then you shall sing me a song, but not one of those

moonlight ditties, child—something gay, lively, funny, any thing, to let me feel for half an hour, the pleasure I now experience.” Laura was instantly at the piano, having rung the bell, and Mr. Law’s fingers were nearly tired with snapping an accompaniment; his feet, fingers, arms, hands and legs, seemed all to come in for a share of the work, as he either whistled or hummed the air which Laura sung; and when the song was concluded he bowed his head with much gravity, and remarked, that he was afraid to encore it, as his accompaniment might not be appreciated. It was sung again, and Law, as he wished her good night, remarked that for forty years, he never had felt unalloyed pleasure, until this evening; that now he believed, he might forget the misery of the past, and sometimes hear from Lady de Lancy, the same song as she had sung that evening.

Laura took his hand; “Unkind man,” she said, playfully, “you have enjoyed your evening, and leave me to a sleepless night.”

"How so, child?" said old Law as he patted her on the hand.

"Because you have hinted at a secret, in the title of Sir Albert de Lancy, and you have left a woman condemned to vigilance of thought, in endeavouring to unravel the mystery. I cannot sleep but under a promise, (if nothing at variance with your honor prevents you) that you will, within five days reveal it to me."

"You said if *he* came back, you should be the happiest girl in England. If he does come back, he will explain it himself, if not, you had better not seek to know a secret, which is generally a burthen to a female heart to carry without sharing the load with another, and which, when known, would lead you to think worse of human nature; therefore promise to wait contented but a few days, and if he returns, I'd promise you all the pleasures derived from a title, and with Raven Castle, to leave as an heir-loom. Good night, child, if virtue is peace of mind, contentment, and happiness, your pillow will not this night be turn-

ed upon in broken slumbers, but sleep, such as alone the good experience, or the poor receive as a recompence for the labour imposed by men, will be your reward.—How very hard it blows, I hope my chimney pots will not render a coroner's inquest necessary to be held in my house !”

Laura watched her benefactor as he slowly ascended the stairs, then musing to herself, followed the train of thought which Mr. Law's conduct had inspired. Ungenerous, she thought, to fix a term of reproach upon a whole community, or brand with opprobrium a sect in religion ; this one man redeems a thousand villanies, which the low caviller, the hungry attorney might fix upon his profession ; where is a man so much to be envied, as when having the power to defend the weak, and oppose the oppressor, he disregards all personal profit, and works in the cause of the destitute ? Who could be more envied than the physician, who seeks by his knowledge to assuage the pains and aches of the wretched, or who gives some portion of his time to the friendless, and the

poor ; but the attorney, who honestly defends his client, and who rescues the lamb from the claws of the wolf. " God bless him," said Laura, " if the prayers of a grateful heart avail in heaven, God bless him."

The gale of wind, which blew with unabated fury, was the cause of wrecks innumerable, upon the shores of England and Ireland ; and although Laura scanned with eager eye, every paragraph which had reference to the disasters, nothing occurred to make her more uneasy, as to the fate of her lover. The Spitfire was nowhere mentioned, neither was there any doubt, as to the name and characters of the vessels wrecked upon the coast. If the crew were swallowed up in the surf, the stern frame and portions of cargo washed on shore, gave some clue to the trade of the vessel. For four days the wind continued, and although Mr. Law had the good fortune to avoid the coroner's inquest, some of his neighbours were not so fortunate ; deaths by accident were frequent, trees were blown down like laths, old men and women tottering with infirmity, were thrown

with violence upon the pavement, and the newspapers teemed with "Horrid accidents occasioned by the storm."

There was one man whose mind was more agitated than the elements; it was the repentant sinner, who for a moment was still considered the lawful owner of Raven Castle, and who, in the solitude of his retirement, dreaded lest each breeze should bear on its howl the call of some officer of justice, or the voice of his brother reproaching him with the abduction of Laura Mackenzie.

CHAPTER XII.

"IF Snarling had been alive now, he would have called this a gale hard enough to blow the devil's horns off his head; it makes as much row as the explosion; and if it had come on a moment after the blow up, half those trees from the Isle of Pines, would have landed on the lizard point."

"Curse the gale," said another of the very reduced crew of the Spitfire, "I should care little for that if we could get rid of that cursed frigate, which we cannot shake off; there she is, gaining on us, under her reefed courses, and close reefed top-sails; she rises over the sea like a duck, whilst we, pressed down by our canvass, are more like divers than swimmers, and

then those cursed Mother Carey's chickens, which even in this breeze make a noise loud enough to be heard, seem to rejoice in the gale, and promise its continuance."

"They are wonderful birds to be sure," replied the other, "they seem to breathe better in a breeze, which if a man opened his mouth would blow half the teeth down his throat, and then they set on the water and tumble over the break of the sea as if it could only wash their eyes, and clean their beaks. What's the Captain about? I never knew him take a chase like this, so unconcernedly."

"Ever since the last affair at the Pines, he has taken every thing unconcernedly, and why we come poking our noses in English waters, when we might have picked up a few more hands from La Guyra, Havannah, or Vera Cruz, no one can tell."

"I think, Tom, our character was blown upon a little after that affair, and perhaps we are better out of those latitudes. When once those Admirals want to promote a favourite, or give a young nobleman a chance of being no-

ticed in one of their despatches, they would not mind letting half the stations be neglected to gain their point; then you know, they are looked upon as good men by the parents, and all the old weather beaten chaps who have toiled for years and years, until they have as much white hair on their heads as would twist up into a locket chain of a fathom and a half in length, see the beardless youngster clapped over their heads, and are told to be quiet, and contented, because he was the son of a lord; well, a pirate vessel, Bob, and such a one as us who make no bones of robbing a church, or of plundering a craft, would be just the thing for them. Lord love you, the boats would advance under three deafening cheers, the defence would be the most determined, and bloody, and the young gentleman, hardly big enough to rap at his father's door, without standing on sixpenn'orth of halfpence, would lead the boarders, throw the Captain overboard, and after running a score of us through the body, spitting us like so many larks for roasting, and performing prodigious feats of valour,

(those are the words Bob,) he hawls down the black flag with his own hands, and hoists the British ensign at the peak of the conquered pirate."

"My eye, Tom, what a secretary you would make for a commander in chief; I'm blessed if you would not make a hero out of that young Philadelphia lawyer, who stuck so fast in Snarling's throat, that he could scarcely say a word without blessing him; that's the way they work it, is it?"

"Aye, that's the way; the industrious are the road makers for the idle; the labourer tills the ground and drags out his existence at twelve shillings a week, until he is too old to work, and then he gets a retiring pension for life in a workhouse. I was brought up to that, but finding other people profited by my labour, I took to our trade, made war with all the world, and am an independent gentleman, ready to be hanged at a moment's warning."

"How the craft surges through this sea, and just look how nobly that frigate stems it, she is gaining upon us, but without something gives

way she'll never near us sufficiently, to keep sight of us these dark nights; we had better tell the Captain how we get on; I never knew him so drunk, or so drowsy before; he thinks nothing can touch the schooner, but the flying Hebe, and although they have altered the paint of that frigate, I'll swear she is the same which gave us such a tug before, and which has now got us in a more uncomfortable position than the last time we saw her."

"Take a peep, Bob, there's that Captain measuring a chart, instead of measuring the distance between us and the frigate; he seems more intent upon that, than some priests at their prayers."

To the seaman's remarks, that the frigate evidently gained upon them, the Captain paid no attention; but turning round, abruptly, desired some one to go aloft, and look out for the land, on the lee bow.

Half an hour afterwards, it was distinguished, it was the coast of Ireland; and the part first made out, was Achile head, on the western part of the island. The frigate was at

this time, on the schooner's weather quarter, at least six miles distant, fore-reaching a little, but very little; the wind was about N. N. W. blowing very fresh.

It had been the Captain's endeavours to reach the coast of Wales, by passing to the northward of Ireland, making his course between Fair head, and the Mull of Cantyre. The frigate when first seen, was on his weather quarter about a point, and trusting to the superiority of the Spitfire's sailing, he had continued his course under a press of sail, until the land was made broad on his lee bow. He now began to see the danger of his situation, and the more he pondered over the chart, the more he became sensible of the perils to be encountered; he could not attempt to tack, the wind and sea were too high for that manœuvre, and even if done, the frigate from her position would have cut him off, if he bore up, the frigate would have made an angle, and have enclosed him between the land and herself; if he continued, he might weather cape Urris, but if the wind headed him half a point,

he must be forced into Donegal bay ; and even if the wind remained true, it was a miracle, if he could round the Bloody Foreland. To windward was a fearful enemy, a ship of extraordinary fleetness ; one which in the annals of the navy of England, has never had an equal : and she under every advantage from her power and weight in a sea way ; to leeward was a danger to all seamen, the most appalling—a lee-shore, on which the long sea of the Atlantic broke with terrific force, whitening the coast with its spray, and offering but few very few inlets, to save the tempest tossed seaman, in his dangerous extremity.

The compasses in vain measured the distance upon the chart, it was evident the Spitfire could not pass more than four miles, a most insignificant distance to windward off cape Urris, and then the slightest variation would throw her into the bay of Donegal. The few books on board, relative to navigation, had reference principally to the coasts on which the Spitfire was accustomed to cruize, and the want of a man acquainted with the part on

which she now was, contributed to augment the apprehension of the Captain.

The seamen, with the indifference of men, ever accustomed to hair breadth escapes, continued their conversation, unmindful and without knowing the danger to be encountered ; on the weather quarter, they knew was sure death ; for a vessel which they had plundered the morning previous to the increase of the wind, had been boarded in their sight by the frigate, and the character of the Spitfire had been ascertained from those who had suffered by her lawless aggression. Although the stranger gained a little, that little was scarcely heeded ; the dark night would assist her escape, and the song and the glass would enliven the moments, and banish the idea of danger.

Far different was it with the Captain : every minute rendered his situation more painful, and every half hour rendered the danger more difficult to remedy. Once, whilst pondering over the charts, and observing the few chances of escape, he thought of bearing up for black Sod bay ; and running down between Achile

island, and the main, escaping by the small outlet to the southward, towards the isle of Clare; but he was not informed of the dangers of the coast, and it would be dark before he could enter the straight; and this his only chance of escape, was lost in the indetermination of his mind, to avail himself of it.

As the evening drew to a close, the land was observed gradually increasing to the northward, until the last head-land, which was cape Urris, was not more than three points, on the lee bow. The sun, over which the clouds had passed with fearful rapidity, was sinking red and fiery; dark clouds seemed gathering to windward, whilst over their heads, the scud flew fast around them, the sea broke furiously, and in the air sea gulls, and mother Carey's chickens swept upon their strong wings over the surface of the foaming water, or swam over the toppling sea.

Never, until this moment, had the Captain of the Spitfire been apprehensive of his fate; for those who escape detection grow bolder as their crimes increase, and familiarity with dan-

ger renders the mind superior to difficulties ; but here was no possibility of blinding himself to the fate which awaited him : to windward was the gallows, to leeward, the impervious horror of the leeward shore. The sun sank, and was lost in the ocean, and darkness and night approached ; (the long, long night of December, rendered longer from the apprehension, that it was the last his eyes might see,) soon drew its sable curtain over the world ; the wind grew more boisterous, and the sea broke more frequently over them, still did the Spitfire maintain her well deserved character, she rose cleverly to the sea, and in spite of the weight of her canvass, which pressed her much, she behaved, uncommonly well.

It was strange in this dreadful moment to hear the voice of the seamen singing, the hoarse wind making the base as it rattled through the rigging, and occasionally a burst of laughter, as if no danger was near, followed the merry song, whilst the Captain paced his deck, stopping for every sea, turning shorter, and shorter, each moment looking to leeward,

expecting to see the high bluff point of cape Urris, on his lee bow, then fixing his eye on the canvass, and trying, by a gentle luff, to see if the wind had varied more to the westward ; no, the wind to which the fickle mind is frequently assimilated, was that night as steady as unflinching bravery ; it never broke the schooner off a point, to give one moment's hope of escape, by wearing, or allowed her to look to windward of her former course, and thus bring the land broader on her lee beam ; the error had been committed. The schooner after dark, instead of wearing and running all risks of detection in gaining the open sea, had continued to the eastward, and perhaps in this error, some forgiveness might be demanded, since in this direction, was the one only object of the Captain's thoughts, one from whose love, he had never swerved, and one who would believe him dead, and mourn him within ten days of the night now in question. It is hard to turn a lover from the abode of his love, and discretion and prudence are lost when the heart is fixed upon one only object.

For a long time, the Captain wavered in his determination to apprise his crew of the utter hopelessness of their situation, for if he did, he knew that some, reckless of danger, despising all preparation for death, would resort to drunkenness, whilst others if such formed a part of his crew, which was doubtful, would, after a partial intoxication betake themselves to prayers, and in the emergency of the moment, lose the presence of mind so absolutely necessary for escape. "No," said he to himself, "as they live so must they die; of what avail would be the half drunken prayer for forgiveness, and mercy wafted on the wind accompanied by a deep curse for a companion; the death bed confession, and the last cry for mercy, are the results of fear, not of contrition; and better not to insult their Maker, by a vow, which if by his gracious hand, the danger was evaded, would be obviated by the oath so frequently recorded. No," he continued musing, "it is better they should die unreclaimed, than meet death with a lie quivering on their lips." He now turned his thoughts to her he loved; he

retired to his cabin, and there wrote two letters, couched in terms of the warmest affection, desiring her never to seek out his mode of life, and in one parting sentence, in which he wrote as it were his soul, he implored her to lift her angel voice to heaven in his behalf, and in the very jaws of death, he confirmed his former love. These letters he placed in bottles which he securely corked, and kept them in readiness to be thrown overboard, as the danger grew more imminent; once more he attempted to pray, but at that moment the remembrance of all his former wrongs, prompted some malice in his heart, and the recollection of his life alarmed him from his purpose; all was done that he could do, or would have done, save the record of his life, that was too long, and too painful, to be committed to paper at such a moment; for when he had finished a letter, in which he forgave his brother, and called upon him to be the friend and protector of Laura Mackenzie, as in impassioned language, he recorded the discovery of Rawlinson and his papers, and dwelt with mildness and

moderation, upon the accumulated injury he had suffered from his brother ; he called down a blessing instead of a curse upon the author of all his crimes, and implored Providence to prosper and protect him. His name was scarcely written, when the man on deck called with a loud voice, " Land upon the lee bow !"

The Captain was instantly on deck ; there, too palpable for a doubt was the land of cape Urris, and as an occasional glimpse of moonlight gleamed through the clouds, the boiling surf was distinguished. It is said, when an earthquake is going to occur, that animals are sensible of the approaching danger ; that horses are unquiet, and refuse to lie down, and that dogs moan aloud, and become drowsy and inactive ; whether the voice of fate calling upon her victims, or the alarm these words, " land to leeward," in a gale of wind, ever conveys to a seaman's mind, roused the sleeping wretches to look upon the danger with which they were surrounded, is unknown ; but every man was on deck—a general consternation ensued—and the panic was universal.

The danger, although imminent, was yet some hours distant, during which time, much acrimony of remark occurred; some accused the Captain of the violation of his oath, in having brought the vessel into that dilemma, which by prudence, might have been avoided; others who always were most active with advice, urged the necessity of attempting to tack, and in spite of the frigate, which was visible on the quarter, run by her, and trust to the heels of the Spitfire, although it was evident she had at last found her superior in the flying Hoebe; the very idea of a chance, suggested to the crew the necessity of the attempt, and the Captain, who saw a certain capture on the one hand, and a certain wreck on the other, in vain upbraided his crew with the cowardice of their intention, and boldly called upon them to perish, rather than be hung before thousands of spectators, amidst the hooting and revilings of the mob.

"We *may* escape," they said, "by this effort."

"And we may all be saved," said the Captain coolly; "although the schooner be lost, nay, we can insure a better chance, she will yet fetch the harbour of Killibegs, we can run in, and setting fire to the vessel, escape on shore, whilst the flames will draw attention in a contrary direction to ourselves."

To this plan, which if they had found that narrow and dangerous entrance, might have been crowned with success, there was a louder opposition, and when one of the crew detected the Captain in throwing over the bottles, he called his shipmates around him, and boldly accused his commander of a violation of his oath, of which these preparations were an evidence.

"I call upon you, by your oaths," said the commander, "to obey me to the last, as you have pledged yourselves to do!"

"You have violated the oath, and you no longer command us;—put down the helm, Bob, and round with her."

In vain the Captain attempted to enforce his authority, fear and consternation rendered the

crew callous to his threats, and disobedient to his orders ; all talked at once, each man was clamorous to be heard, and the confusion and dismay, was above all control.

“ Down with the helm, Bob, she’ll stay ; although the sea’s as high as the clouds, and the wind is as loud as the noise of a long gun.”

“ Fool !” said the Captain, “ would you hasten the end you are endeavouring to avert, if she misses stays, she will drift upon cape Urris and then not a soul will be saved. Look at the surf as it boils upon the shore, and the foam which hisses and breaks upon the reef, whilst the spray almost covers its highest peak ; let her go past the cape, and then—”

“ Aye, then indeed,” interrupted a voice, “ we may talk if we can, we shall be land locked, and the devil himself with his tail for a tow rope, would never creep us to windward. Down with the helm, Bob, we can run by the frigate, who cares for a shot or two, and who can point a gun in a sea-way like this ?”

"Stop one moment," said the commander "before you attempt this rashness ; ever since I have commanded you, have I not done my utmost to preserve the vessel, and the crew ? have I ever broken the oath, which bound me to you all ? No one answers, then you assent. Now I warn you, that the vessel, beautiful sea boat as she is, will never stay in this gale, and this head sea, you have no room to wear, and you will fall either a certain prize to the frigate, and be led to execution upon your arrival in England ; or you will force the vessel upon that reef, from which not one of us can possibly be saved ; if we forge ahead into Donegal bay, we may either, run into Killibega, and trust to our legs for an escape, or we may wreck the vessel in some bay, more sheltered, than those rocks, to which at present we are so near."

"Down with the helm, Bob ; never mind his long yarn."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE Captain's expostulations were all in vain; death, however ignominious, appeared more consonant with their wishes, than the dangers of the lee shore. The vessel was under her fore and aft fore-sail, and main-sail only, the wind was high, and the sea was more irregular than further seaward.

The helm was put down, and the obedient vessel flew up into the wind; but her way was suddenly lost, a heavy sea struck her on the chestree, the fore-sail flapped heavily in the squall, which at that unlucky moment rather strengthened the wind, and shaking furiously, ultimately split; another sea struck her on the weather bow, and the schooner refusing to stay broke off upon the larboard tack again. The

fore-sail was instantly hoisted, and to avoid drifting on the rocks, the Spitfire was kept a point away, and rounded cape Urris, about a couple of miles from the reef. The crew of that vessel were accustomed to activity in all emergencies, and now clear of the reef, they began to think the Captain's proposition the best; they all declared they would follow his orders, and talked loudly of the oath, from which they had released him.

"Never," he said, "will I command the schooner again; you have violated all discipline, you have taken the command yourselves, and you may retain it; now the frigate will soon come up with us, and she has a retreat to seaward, whenever she likes, or a harbour in Killibegs, under her lee; but our trial is to come, and at least, I hope we may meet our end like men, and not go down to our destiny degraded by drunkenness. We have but a few minutes left us; our oath is absolved, we are now at the termination of life, free, the chain which bound us, the shackle which secured us, has dropt from us, we are no longer pirates,

but repentant men. It is useless attempting an escape, by means of the harbour of Killibegs; under this sail we cannot fetch it, our journey of life is bounded by those rocks, and our longest distance is to Donegal bay."

"Don't stand jabbering there," said Bob, "about souls, heaven's, mercy and such; if we go, we do go, but I'm blessed if we do go, without an effort to escape. Up with the new fore and aft fore-sail, unbend the old one, cut adrift the spars on the booms, and give the boat a chance for a swim; if the gallant little Spitfire strikes, the frigate's shots, there they go to leeward half a mile, will never injure us, and she will be obliged to keep clear of us to save herself;—whilst there is life, there is hope. To work, to work."

A new courage seemed to be instilled by the words of Bob. The new foresail was soon set, and the schooner, disregarding the fire of the *Hæbe* now steering evidently for Killibegs, kept close to the wind, intending, as Bob said, coolly to look out, for the smoothest part, in which to strand her.

To windward, the gale promised to increase; to leeward, the land became every minute more clearly distinguished; the beautiful vessel still clung to the wind, in spite of its power, and rose over the broken sea in spite of its force; but all was of no avail; she was embayed, the high land of Cape Urris was on her weather quarter, and Cape Malin, and the Bloody Farland, were, although far distant, broad on the weather bow, whilst all to leeward was a coast defended by a reef of rocks, over which the sea broke with tremendous fury. Still with the appalling sight before their eyes, still with the expectation of instant death, without the remotest chance of escape, the crew of the pirate vessel indulged in occasional levity, and fearless of all consequences laughed at the danger, as one not a bit more serious than many others, they had escaped.

Far different was the thought of the Captain; his life of crime could scarcely be atoned for, by an hour of sincere repentance, although that life had been the consequence of a good action; but in the solitude of his cabin, whilst

the loud wind, and the noisy sea would have drowned his words, he offered up his prayers in sincerity, and he believed those prayers, were heard.

Awakened from his devotion by the sudden thought, that in this life, it behoves every man to use his utmost endeavours to preserve the blessing which God has bestowed upon us, and that in danger and in difficulty, we are left to our own resources, and called upon by our own feelings to put our shoulders to the wheel, he again assumed the command, prayer could scarcely be expected to still the wind, or cause its variation, and those, who on such an occasion, lost the moment which might have been seized, and turned to advantage, merit neither pity nor forgiveness ; we are not in this world, like the idle servant, to leave our talents unemployed, or believe that the uniformity of the great Creator's designs are to be changed, because a few despairing prayers are in the moment of danger, hastily offered.

"It is my duty," said the commander, "to use my utmost endeavours, to save you, but if

I succeed, I declare myself no longer bound by any obligation to remain with you; again, I offer myself in this almost hopeless situation, and if you are willing to obey me in danger, and in difficulty, I will do my utmost to that end."

"Why no one ever thought you would desert us," said Bob, "upon a pinch, like this; of course, you have been overhauling the log book of your life, and added up your reckonings as to the course, and distance run, and the same to steer to the other place; you know you've hove the log for the last time, and now as you think you'll never have to turn the glass again, you are come on deck to die like a man, and not slink below like a coward, in a carnage. Bless your heart, there's not a man fore and aft the Spitfire, who cares a straw about his life, as long as you stick to us."

"I will do my best, my lads, but I see no escape; still, with coolness and attention, we may save some lives, although the vessel is split into planks not large enough to make—"

"Coffins for the crew, Sir," said Bob, with a

smile, "we don't want them, all our chaps sleep in hammocks, and they fit their backs better."

"How far can you see the land to leeward?" said the Captain.

"About a point before the beam, from that, right aft."

The Captain went below; on his table a chart had been previously opened, the corners of which were fastened down by small nails, a swinging lamp gave a feeble light, although quite strong enough to show the dangerous position of the schooner, an order was given to take the exact bearing of Cape Urris, and the distance was easily measured; over the Captain's head, was a compass, he anxiously inspected the position of the Spitfire, and ascertained that there was no possibility of reaching Killibegs, to which place the frigate had evidently steered, leaving the pirate to the fate, she had courted. The various openings on the coast to leeward were carefully examined, until hope itself grew sick, for in those days, the charts were not made with the

surprising accuracy of the present times, and the numerous crosses alone indicated the danger, to be apprehended, without pointing out, with sufficient accuracy to avoid them, the actual positions of each. There appeared one small spot on which no cross existed, and there alone could hope suggest the possibility of escape. Still the Spitfire plunged on in a desperate struggle against wind and wave, although she drifted fast to leeward, and now began to give more evident proof of her nearing the shore, from the irregular roll occasioned by the rebound of the sea from the rocks.

It was not until then, that the slightest remark, indicative of an absolute conviction of their danger, escaped from the crew, and then appeared the consummate coolness of those men who had faced death a hundred times, without ever fearing his approach.

"I say, Bob," said one man, "now's the time to clap on another suit of clothes, and get ready for a start."

"Aye, and I advise you to put some money in your pockets, for who can tell, if it does not

pass in the other world, and is just as useful in buying a friend."

"I shall just take a parting glass to the health of the black-eyed girl, at Vera Cruz," said a mongrel Spaniard.

"There's nothing like a cigar to keep the cold water from chilling you," remarked a sturdy Portuguese, whilst another Englishman bringing upon deck, a piece of beef and biscuit, declared that no man could swim if his stomach was empty, and although all knew the danger, not a man talked of dying, excepting as a joke, not one offered up a prayer for forgiveness, it seemed to be a mark of their desperate lives, to meet death unappalled, as an Indian chief withstands the torture without an expression of pain.

The awful moment had now nearly arrived, and the clouds no longer hid the danger from sight; the moon—the same moon which showed to the Hebe the narrow and dangerous opening of the harbour of Killibegs, in her clear light, brought to view the boiling surf, which rolled over the vessels, close to leeward,

whilst it showed how far the reef extended from the main land.

There was no man cooler than the Captain; he had a night glass in his hand, and apparently unawed by the terrors which surrounded him, he swept the reef from east to west, in hopes of discovering the inlet which he had studied on the chart.

The crew began to watch their leader with more intense anxiety.

"A man to the lead," said the Captain, "see both anchors clear," he continued, after a moment's pause.

"Seven fathoms;" said the man with the lead.

"Does the bottom feel hard?"

"It's all rocks together, Sir."

"Now, my lads, our chance depends upon ourselves, and our good luck; stand by to take in all the sails, and let go both anchors at once, we must veer away to the clinch. I fear the rocks will soon wear the cable away, then, if that occurs, we must run up the fore-sail, and run the schooner on shore, end on,

through that place, which does not seem to be quite so rocky as the generality of the coast." There was no time lost in availing themselves of this almost hopeless chance ; the sails were reduced, the anchors let go, the cables veered ; but as the Spitfire fell off, the cables flew through the hawse holes with the most fearful rapidity ; all attempts to check them, by means of stoppers or of choaking the hawse, was impossible, as no one could approach them. With anxious look each man now awaited the result, it was but a moment of hope ; the sudden jerk, as the cables ran out to the clinch, snapped them both, the foresail was instantly run up, and the schooner was now before the wind, running on the rocks ; each sea lifted her on its bosom, and then leaving her in a fearful valley between the one which ran hissing and foaming towards the rocks, and the succeeding one, which, breaking as it advanced, threatened to bury her in its tremendous mass.

Every man now came aft ; each one seemed careful to avail himself of the nearest place to

the taffrail, whilst Bob, who had strung up his nerves to meet the awful moment with coolness, stood at the helm, and steered the craft. Each sea rose higher and higher, and each one, as the schooner approached the shore, broke before it reached her ; then on it came howling and hissing with tremendous force, the foam roaring alongside, as the curling top not unfrequently threatened to poop and swamp the schooner.

At that awful moment, when the struggle for existence was so close, no hand was pointed, no voice implored the aid or protection, or no sigh for past crime was offered to heaven ; each seaman grasped the taffrail, or glued his eager hands to a cleat, whilst their eyes were fixed upon the boiling hell of waters, which seemed extended to receive them, and when the noise of the coming sea, breaking before it arrived, struck upon their ears, they crouched down, keeping their eyes upon the reef ; but there were two, who seemed of iron nerve, above all fear—one was the helmsman, who carefully watched the sea, and by his adroit

management of the helm, prevented the reeling vessel from broaching to; the other was the Captain, who prepared to die, yet fearful of his death, coolly watched the tremendous breakers, and yet hoped; for hope never dies, to pass the outer reef, and be thrown in comparatively smooth water; not one hundred yards before them, roared the boiling surge, the vessel was carried onward, and dashed towards the rocks; as the sea left her, the keel just touched, but not hard enough even to stop her way, although every man was sensible of the shock; then came the last and most fearful sea, each man crouched down, the helmsman forsook his post, for the vessel threatened to be overwhelmed, the Captain clung to the main mast; the hissing foam broke upon her as the tremendous surge roared by lifting her upon its bosom, and propelling her with the most fearful rapidity upon the reef; she struck, one loud cry was heard above the noise of the angry elements—one scream, and in that scream, the first prayers which had fallen from the lips of the hardened scoffer, towered above

the wind, and "the Lord save us!" was audible; in that shriek was the only appeal for mercy, the slight vessel broke into separate planks, the large masts were hurled from their hold, the long gun sunk upon the reef, and not a soul was visible; all were separated, some, for one second, made an ineffectual struggle against the whirlpool which sucked them down in its vortex; others, dashed upon the sharp pointed rocks, had hardly strength to turn their bleeding sides before they choaked; and others turned over in the sea, were instantaneously swallowed up; the boat was carried over the reef and swam; whilst the numerous spars, all of which had been previously cut adrift, were caught in the rocks, or hurled away beyond the breakers; the foremast head caught against the reef, and the next sea turned the spar completely over, the mainmast, to which one person clung with all the energy of a dying man first landed on the reef, and on its upper surface, the only surviving man of the Spitfire, still breathed; the following sea lifted it clear of the rocks, and it floated with its gasping

load in the smooth water near the boat, and there relieved from the continued break of the sea, it floated in security, affording a safe asylum to the man, who grasped it firmly, and gave him time to recover some portion of his strength.

Near the mast floated pieces of the wreck, planks which but a few minutes before, formed part of the most beautiful vessel which ever swam the seas; whilst the reef retained the mangled bodies of the pirates, with some of their ill-gotten wealth. An hour had scarcely elapsed ere the boat was tenanted, the oars which the prudent foresight of the Captain had caused to be secured underneath the thwarts, were soon released and in the clear moonlight, might have been seen one man diligently sculling the boat towards a sandy beach not far distant, and he the only survivor of the Spitfire !

CHAPTER XIV.

THE rough night was followed by a rough morning ; along the shore of Donegal Bay, was strewed the planks and portions of a wreck ; but not a vestige was seen of any of sufficient size to speak confidently as to her build or her rig. Each sea, as it rolled to the beach, turned over some corpse and threw the dead upon the shore, the mangled bodies, bloated, swollen, disfigured, of at least twenty men were found at daylight, whilst a boat lay on the beach.

The wild inhabitants of that part of the coast were soon on the alert ; there can be no harm in robbing the dead ; for of what use can their money be to them, and who is to trouble himself in endeavouring to find out the next of kin to a drowned man ?

That the vessel had come from foreign parts, was evident from the coin found in the pockets of the seamen ; but there was no trace of the name, save the very doubtful one of Dobbs, which was found on a part of the stern frame. The principal portion of the wreck was safely removed to the huts in the vicinity, and the earliest strangers, who arrived to dispute the slender remains on the beach, were the officers of the Høbe who had been sent to survey the whole Bay of Donegal to Cape Urris, by their Captain; he being well aware that the schooner must have been wrecked. This party consisted of some seamen and marines, with the officers who had orders to seize any of the survivors, and to be more diligent in search for the men, than in saving portions of the wreck.

It was evident one or more had escaped, for the boat had been guided into a very narrow creek, to the head of which she could not have drifted, besides the painter of the boat was made fast to a small stump of a tree. A diligent search was immediately established, but there was no trace, with the exception of the

footstep of one man, who had evidently leapt from the bow of the boat and whose footmarks were deep in the sand. Beyond the beach all trace was lost, and in spite of the vigilance and activity of the officers, no tidings could be learnt concerning the fortunate man who had thus escaped uninjured the dangers of the wreck. The sea still roared over the reef, and all attempts to examine that grave in which the secret was buried, was impossible; the peasantry retired to their miserable huts, rejoicing at this unexpected windfall, and the detachment from the *Hoebe* returned to their frigate, not having gained the slightest information, excepting as regarded the name of Dobbs.

It was ten at night, the gale had long since passed, and few remembered its force and its consequences but the underwriters of Lloyd's; there indeed the breeze and the gale leaves lasting impressions; for that which attacks the pocket, always assails the mind and the memory. The streets of London still thronged with the industrious and the weary, all seeking their homes, and amongst this busy tribe, the

tall figure of a man whose hasty stride betokened his extreme haste, pushed his way through the crowd, and regardless of all insults which were conveyed to his ears, passed rapidly on. It is said that when a man is anxious to advance rapidly in London, he should make up his mind to go leisurely, he will avoid by this means sudden contact, which occasionally leads to considerable altercation and delay, and will verify the old adage, of slowly but surely.

"The time expires to-night," said Laura to her old friend, "it is Saturday and to-morrow is a day of rest."

"We will give him to-morrow for a chance," said Mr. Law, "it is a *Dies non*, and even the attorney may repose, the debtor on that day may breathe untouched the open air, and all save the felon walk under the protection of the Sabbath; we will, I say, give him the chance of the next twenty-four hours."

"Hah!" said Laura, "there is a rap at the door."

"I heard it, and therefore you need not

have announced it, you lose a great quantity of breath in useless remarks."

Laura looked at her strange friend, he would as soon have cut his throat, as have uttered one word which could annoy his charge; but it was habitual, he could not abide an useless remark.

"Each rap," continued Laura, "alarms me now, and in the alarm I feel a pleasure, which only expectation can experience, how slowly the servant moves at this unusual summons."

"Poor girl, poor girl," said Law, "yours is true love, it does not 'bend with the remover to remove.' Your ears are now more attentive than the faithful house dog's, your heart beats quickly even at a sound, as common as the Jew's cry of old clothes, and the poor servant whose day's work is over and who ought now to be in bed, is chided because he does not rush to welcome the very disturber of his repose."

"An old man, Sir," said the servant, "wishes to speak with you for a moment."

"Does he look like a Jew, or a sailor?" said

Laura. The man could not refrain from a smile, as two more opposite characters could not be well imagined.

“Has he a smooth face?” said Mr. Law, catching a certain disposition to be jocose; “or does he wear top-boots, for a Jew without a beard, or a sailor in top-boots, are two of the most unlikely occurrences in life.”

Mr. Law was informed, that in the opinion of his servant, the person was neither a Jew, nor a sailor, but a very respectable looking personage very anxious to see Mr. Law.

“Show him up,” said Mr. Law; “now my little dear, I dare say you think this some young man with an old face.” Anxiously indeed did Laura look for the entrance of the stranger, who hobbled up stairs but slowly; at last he made his appearance, it was Herbert. The cottage had been lent to the invalid midshipman’s uncle, and Herbert had obtained permission to come to London on his own business.

“And what’s your business, Herbert,” said Laura with much kindness, “do you want any

money, only say what you want, and if it is in my power you shall receive it ?”

“ I want,” said Herbert, who had grown very old and a little childish ; and who endeavoured to stop his tears as he spoke, “ I want to see my master, my dear young master, and then to die.”

“ You are not singular,” said Law, “ in one of your wishes, we all want to see your young master ; but as to the dying, we only die of love here ; go down to the kitchen, Tom, take care of Herbert, give him a good supper, a glass of warm wine, and a comfortable bed ; and no man will talk about dying after that ; poor fellow, age has sadly shaken him, and in his present situation, he is but little qualified, as an evidence of a fact, which occurred years ago.”

“ What fact, Mr. Law ?”

“ Ladies should never ask questions, when, in all probability, they will get no answer ;—there, don’t pout girl, let me see, don’t be angry, Laura, but I am going to ask you a favour, difficult to grant ; don’t speak to me for ten

minutes," here, this curious old gentleman covered his eyes with his hands, and in that state remained about seven minutes, when he sprang to the ball, and pulled it violently, "mind," he said to the servant, "mind, I see Herbert before he goes to bed ; now, girl, you may talk again."

The attention of Laura was too much fixed to heed his remarks ; her eyes seemed fixed, her attention rivetted, and her hands, which she had clasped together, gradually appeared to be forcing each other still closer. Law thought she had gone mad, he stood before her looking close upon her face ; but she took not the slightest notice of him.

" Thank God !" she suddenly exclaimed, " it is him ! he is here !"

" Him !" said old Law turning round,—
" here,—where ? why, child, you frighten me ; there is no one here, not a soul, but ourselves."

" There ! again, open that window, and my life upon it, your client, my promised husband, is within ten yards of your door."

Law caught her arm, as she rushed towards the window, believing her mad; but although excited almost to madness, she still had sufficient command over herself, not to frighten her friend. Listen, Sir," she said, "you will hear a tune, which no one ever whistled but Albert—now—there!"

Law inclined his ear on one side, and he certainly did hear some one whistling; but why Albert, if it was him, should stand out in the cold whistling, when he might have walked in and talked," puzzled the solicitor, "why does he not come in if it is him, child? Bless you, its some one who has heard the tune, and being very much embarrassed for company, is making a little musical society for himself."

"Perhaps he thinks it is too late, that we are all in bed, and he is unwilling to disturb us."

"Perhaps, Miss, he's a greater fool, than I took him for;—here you, Samuel, Thomas, Robert, what the devil's your name? go into the street, and ask that gentleman who is whistling, to walk up; tell him, we are not gone

to bed, and we shall be happy to see him ; we like his music, it certainly is very original."

Tom concluded his master was mad, and being one of those domestics who will think, thought it just as advisable to reconnoitre, before he introduced some desperate character into a room, in which sat only an old man, and a young woman. He cautiously opened the door, and surveyed, as well as he could, the vicinity of his master's house. He was not long in that situation, when he was accosted by a man—" Here, honest fellow," the stranger began, " do you think a piece of gold can unlock your lips ?"

" Very probably, Sir," replied the servant, " providing always, and nevertheless, as master says, the question is asked at a respectable distance."

" Who is your master ?"

" My master is the wonder of the parish, Sir, he is called the honest lawyer, and his name is Law ?"

" Well, like master like man, no doubt ; another answer, and then for the reward ; do

you know were one, Miss Laura Mackenzie lives ?”

“ I say, Sir, I beg your pardon, but are you the gemman, who was whistling the original air ?”

“ Yes, to be sure I was,” replied the stranger.

“ Then master’s compliments, and he begs you’ll walk up ; he is afraid you’ll catch the rheumatism, if you swallow so much cold air ?”

“ What are you talking about there ?” said Mr. Law, who being afraid his order was a little imprudent, came down to welcome the stranger, in the company of his servant.

“ My true, my valued friend,” said Albert as he threw off his cloak, “ behold me within a day of my time !”

“ Within three hours of your death,” said Law ; “ come up stairs.”

“ One question before I move ?”

“ It will be answered on the landing place above,” said the solicitor, “ or I mistake my woman.”

“ In this, however, Mr. Law was mistaken,

for no hand welcomed the stranger, no voice saluted his ear; but on the sofa, in perfect insensibility reclined the beautiful figure of Laura Mackenzie. She was in that state removed up stairs, but not before love had stolen its own property—a kiss; the old house-keeper was summoned and Laura was made over to her care and attention.

“Welcome, Sir Albert de Lancy,” said Law, “the whole mystery is unravelled, and he who now usurps your title, or rather retains it until you claim it, is anxious to make every reparation in his power, to leave the country, to live upon your pardon, and your generosity.”

“We will speak of this on Monday, of affairs dearer to my heart, I would now talk; is Laura the same constant, affectionate girl?”

“She has but one thought, one hope, your return; day after day, has she began with that theme, and it was the last subject on her lips at night; your visit, I hope, is longer than usual, for with all my best wishes, to enter into an explanation on your affairs, half an

hour, is the most time I have ever commanded, and half of that, in a jigging ball room."

"I am in no hurry now ; my time is my own, I am free at last ; another inquiry, and then for to-night I am satisfied—Herbert, my old servant, Herbert, does he live?"

"And eats I promise you. I should think, at this moment, the old man is at his supper, in the servant's hall, drinking your health in a glass of warm wine, nicely spiced. He is getting old, and to establish the case against your brother, is after all, a very doubtful evidence."

"Thank God, Mr. Law, we need no evidence, because it is not my intention to pursue him, or disturb him. I have had reason to understand that he is not only sincerely repentant for all the injustice used towards me, and that injustice has occasioned me a life—"

"Of excitement," said Law, remarking how suddenly he stopped ; "of energy, it has given you an opportunity of amassing a large fortune by your own honorable exertion, which has made the honest and industrious thrive under

your guidance, and protection, and there must be hundreds who bless your name. It is a vast consolation in old age, to look back on a bright retrospect of life, where no palpable injustice towards our fellow creatures, darkens the distant horizon, and where the gloom of the valley of death, is dissipated by the bright rays of a man's memory."

Albert fixed his bright eyes upon the speaker, as if to read, if the words uttered, were a mockery, or a believed truth. But the honest man before him, spoke what he thought, believing that continued application to trade, had rendered his client a wealthy man.

"I have done with trade now," said Albert ; "henceforth, I shall lead a domestic life, and in its quiet, seek repose here." He placed his hand on his heart, then suddenly starting, he asked for the papers he had entrusted to the care of his solicitor.

"On Monday we can arrange all that matter."

"On Monday !" replied Albert, "it is an age ; I cannot wait that time, you have not

opened the packet, surely? I am here to my time."

"If that packet can afford you one moment's comfort, by being returned unopened, I will fetch it, myself. My word of honor, I hope, is sufficient to assure you, that no man has touched it." He went to his office, and in a few minutes, placed the packet in Albert's hand. Without considering the bad compliment paid to his friend, he scrutinized the seals minutely, and satisfied himself, that the parcel had never been opened; he then carefully placed them in the centre of the fire, and as he watched their total demolition, he muttered, "Thus perishes the last witness but one."

Mr. Law had never seen his client, but either in a hurry, or under great excitement, and this act was regarded by that wise man, as a very natural occurrence, for these were supposed documents, only available in case of death. The word "witness" puzzled him a little, but Law was never suspicious, he was an honest man, himself, and believed others to be the same.

"I have but a few more words to say," said Albert; "before we part; the whole secret of my brother's conduct, must remain for ever a secret; he must not be disturbed, either by word or deed, in his possessions; he is a more worthy representative of our family, than myself; we must endeavour to remove any prejudice against him, which might have been occasioned by that unfortunate abduction of Rawlinson."

"How came you to know of that?" asked Law, in surprise; "for no one has communicated with you, since that event."

The question startled Albert, and he told a falsehood to conceal the truth; so true it is, that the least fault, the least deviation from rectitude of conduct, requires a volume of lies to conceal the fact, and the character thus supported, remains upon the precarious pedestal of accumulated falsehoods. "I forget how I heard it, but I did hear it."

"There's no doubt of that since you know it, the circumstance occasioned considerable noise in the county, and Mr. Molesworth

totally estranged himself from your brother, rather your house, in consequence."

"He was ever an honest man. Does he know the circumstance of the will?"

"What will? What circumstance? Why, man, you are very absent to-night, and you look every moment like a false witness under cross examination."

"Good night, Mr. Law; I am not fit to talk on these subjects; now you will not fail to remember me most affectionately to Laura, and to-morrow, I will myself seek an opportunity of reviving in her heart, the sentiments she so often expressed towards myself."

"You must speak then, before you come into the room, or she will forestall your intentions, by throwing her arms round your neck, and confessing her love—good night."

CHAPTER XV.

“It is very strange,” said Law to himself, as he mused over the papers on the Monday, and compared them with a letter he held in his hand. “Here is a case worthy of the ingenuity of a lawyer to fathom, but the draught of these marriage settlements, must be done first; young people are always in a hurry to be married, and as often in a hurry to be released, afterwards; yet it is strange—firstly, we have the fact in this extraordinary confession of Rawlinson, sent to me this morning, which seems to have already been known to my client, then the fact, that the original will was taken from him by a pirate vessel, on the stern of which was marked Jonathan Dobbs. On Sa-

turday night I could have sworn, when that packet was placed on the fire so cautiously, that I saw, as the paper blazed, and the parchment more slowly consumed, "The last will and testament of Ronald de Lancy," as plain as the anxiety of him who caused its destruction; then comes the fact from the little powder monkey, that the vessel known as the West India pirate, had the same name on her stern, at the Isle of Pines. Now we have a vessel of this name wrecked in Donegal Bay, chased by the Hosbe; her stern frame, as they called it, having been washed on shore; one man certainly being saved, by this long rigmarole account of a boat and a painter; there ought to be nautical attorneys; and the sudden appearance of Albert de Lanoy, just giving him due time with all expedition, to reach this house; now leave out the case of the will, the knowledge of the abduction, and the words, 'thus perishes the last witness but one,' and I confess, the case would fall to the ground; then again, how account for his riches, his sudden abandonment of his claim against his

brother, his diamonds, his appearance as a Jew, the return of Rawlinson's coat, the Spanish money given to the servants, at Raven Castle, whew! I had better go on with the marriage settlements, and yet the girl with the fortune should be protected. He gives no account of his trading here or there, and a deserter does not generally become a wealthy man, in a few years. There is a manly honesty in his countenance which defies suspicion, but no man who is guilty, can at all times command even his own heart's blood, which mounting in his face betrays him. I have it, I will unravel this mystery without alarming Laura, or her betrothed husband; yet it would be a pity to separate them, they sit for hours holding each others hands, repeating again and again, like the useless words which swell a legal document, their vows of love and affection—and there the day passes like a dream of happiness; her eyes too, are never one moment withdrawn from his, and so absorbed are they in visions of future delight, that I have passed through the room a dozen times, and

neither of them have remarked me. Strange infatuation, which the consummation of their wishes so often, nay, so certainly endangers. A man cannot be *in love* with his wife, nor his wife with him. That question has been settled, judgment passed, years ago, by those who best understood love, and who held a court of love in France; that's authority as good as a decision in law, by Lord Mansfield. Wilking," he continued, calling his clerk; "here are the sums to be entered on the marriage settlements, when the rough draught is finished, bring them here. I will write a letter."

Thus pondered Law over the strange case of his client, whilst, as he had murmured, the happy couple, quite estranged from the world, were again and again repeating their vows of constancy, their unalterable attachment, and hastening through life, by avoiding its miseries.

"Now you are mine, Albert," said Laura, as he pressed her hand warmly; "now, the world is inclosed in this room, come, tell me of

your roving life, your voyages in distant countries, some adventures, which the sailor must encounter ?”

“ When we are married, and the time begins to hang heavily with my Laura, then will I tell her of distant countries where gold is as common as the sand on the beach ; but now, I can only think of you, your constancy, your firmness in every action of your life, and when your lips confirm again and again, the love you bear me. I could sit for hours, and rejoice at your expressions : let us now only talk of our love, our near marriage, our future place of residence ; we have many a year to pass together, and the anecdotes of youth cheer the decline of life.”

“ How often do you wish me to say, ‘ I love you,’ when the day is fixed for the marriage, and all but the company invited—”

“ Ah, there indeed is room for conversation. I am a man, Laura, who hates all public exhibition, of what should be essentially private ; I despise the gaudy parade, which makes even the postilion, who drives you from your house,

an advertisement to the public, that he conducts a new couple to their honey moon home. I would rather quietly walk into a church unmarried, and walk out again with my wife under my arm, unnoticed, unregarded, than stand the gaze of a score of loiterers, more attracted by the prospect of the breakfast, than allured by any sincerity of regard to those, who mutually surrender their liberty. I think cockades and cakes two abominations, which the world's wisdom will soon consign to oblivion."

"Your wish, dear Albert, is my law; the wedding shall be as quiet as you could desire. I only know two people, who I wish to be present—my uncle, and his son."

"And our mutual friend, and adviser, Law?"

"We cannot exclude old Herbert!"

"Not for the world, and I confess, hating as I do, the swell of company, that I would rather see Ronald and Margaret present. The altar of our union should unite all the family, and the house should no longer be divided against the house. Tell me, Laura, is your heart so

fond, that nothing could estrange it from mine, no report calculated to injure my character, startle you from your intentions, would you wed me through good or ill report, and braving the malice of enemies, dare to place your hand in mine?"

"Oh! if you knew how long the time has seemed, since last we met, how often, how very often, I have sat at the window watching each figure as it passed the house, hoping until hope grew faint with its own exhaustion, to see my Albert. If you knew how I have prayed for you when the wind increased, and the constant rain pattered against the glass, how every hour has been fraught with some remembrance of you, then you would no longer ask that cruel question, which involves a doubt of my love, my affection, and my constancy."

"Generous girl! How often have I heard men swear with equal fervour, and yet believe the slightest accusation, the lightest breath of scandal, and desert the almost unprotected girl."

"It is not so with our sex; we love ardently,

sincerely, and half the pleasure, half the reward of affection, is in the devotedness to the object. I would not hesitate this moment, if the ceremony had been performed, of leaving my country, and my relations, to share, either your glory, or your shame, and not one word should escape my lips, to censure, or condemn you."

"Remember these words, dear Laura; we cannot always appear the same as we do at present; there are changes in life, which often change our sentiments, our regards."

"I never would designate an attachment as love, if that love varied with every trifling circumstance. 'Love is not love which alters, when it alteration finds,' as Shakespeare says. I am not ashamed to own my love, I should only feel ashamed, if I were forced to renounce it; that cannot happen, we have known each other long, we have proved our constancy in years, the time approaches, when my future conduct shall convince you of the sincerity of affection. Why do you look so dull? so pale?"

“Nothing, nothing, my dear, I wish only we were married, and in the retirement of the country, in the happiness of our mutual society, allow life to pass quietly, and unmolestedly away. On this day week, you are to be mine. Oh, that the day had passed ; for I look with distrust to it, fearing that some unforeseen circumstance may rob me of my heart’s dearest wish.”

“Why, you are worse than a boarding school girl, calculating the hours before her holydays, and conjuring up a thousand improbabilities to make herself miserable. It has been my hope for years. I am not ashamed to confess the well placed attachment, I should only feel ashamed if I cease to merit your love.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE lingering delays of the law at last died of their exhaustion; the day previous to the one fixed for the marriage had arrived; the deeds were signed; the money of the settlement was paid to the trustees; and all the preliminary arrangements were completed; the uncle of Laura was introduced to his future nephew; but the young midshipman had suffered so much from the fatigue of travelling that he was unable to be presented to the happy couple, but he had sent a gallant message, that he would die in the church, rather than be absent from such a ceremony.

There was yet one awkward scene: it was the meeting between the two brothers. The rigid

countenance of Sir Ronald had not relaxed its severity; increasing years, and continued contrition had furrowed his face; his eye, once proud and daring, was no longer fixed upon the person with whom he conversed, but in every action every word, the influence of conscience, overcame his resolution, and he dared not look even his brother in the face; such is the result of crime! Had he but mastered the feeling of humiliation, in all probability his brother would have been as conscious-stricken as himself; but the latter being in the right on this occasion, was the bravest.

“ I crave your pardon,” said Sir Ronald to his brother, “ for the injustice I did you.”

“ Brother,” said Albert, “ I require no solicitation of pardon; we meet as friends, and let us not run the risk of a quarrel, by referring to acts and deeds better forgotten by both, better obliterated from memory; there is my hand, I ask no restitution of rights, no liquidation of debts. The title is yours, the castle is yours, I only ask, before I retire from this country, your friendship, your affection.”

“ I have meditated the same retirement beyond, if possible, the seclusion in which I have lately lived ; there is no charm in life, when suspicion dogs us, or when we apprehend suspicion—the hunted criminal dreads the sudden intrusion of the officer, and he who has an accomplice in guilt, walks within reach of the gallows. I would only retain the title for one reason ; it is difficult for a woman to lay aside the appellation which has sounded sweetly in her ears. Flattering her pride, might save me uneasiness ; her father !”—

“ Name him no more, Ronald, he will remain for ever where he is ; and it would save your wife much pain, by stopping all reference to her father, if you rumoured his death.”

“ It shall be done. I have already disposed of his house, by pulling it down. My child may yet restore the honour of our name, since you refuse to become its up-holder, by bearing the title.”

“ I have no wish for titles, those empty names, in which the frivolous rejoice ; I would rather make one for myself, than

inherit the proudest dukedom ; enough of this ; the title and the fortune rest with you, and if I have no children, my fortune will revert to your son. To-morrow, I am to be married ; from that moment, we shall never meet again ; nay, do not start, I have reasons sufficiently strong to induce me never to inhabit this country ; its forms, its customs, its regulations of society, its stiff, formal manner, are to me disgusting. I have seen much of the world, and I have learned, that happiness is not confined to any soil : each man must make his own ; the innocent have their's prepared for them. This then is our meeting, and to-morrow is our separation ; this hour has restored me to partial happiness since I have reconciled a brother ; hereafter, my name may be bruited abroad as one of the wonders of the world, as a man grown rich by industry ; and may no bleak wind of suspicion, rob me of its value ! Say not a word to Laura, as to my intentions of leaving England ; the woman, who marries a sailor, must share in his wandering disposition : we do not exact much from each other, only friendship, and that at a distance."

"There is yet one question, Albert, I would ask, and unless it is answered, I cannot live in security or happiness?"

"Go on, brother, ask freely; to restore you to permanent happiness, I would answer any question, however much I might wish it unanswered."

"It is of Rawlinson's destination, and of certain papers?"

"I answer thus briefly, and let my words silence any future disposition, to refer to this subject; he is in America, and every paper, every parchment—you forced the answer brother—or I should not have mentioned the document which flushed your cheek—is burnt; there is not a record, not even one of the many notes which passed between you and your father-in-law, which can rise from the ashes of that grate, to scare you from Raven Castle."

"Oh what a weight of care, you have taken from my heart; and yet how could you know of these papers, how—"

"Brother, farewell! to-morrow we meet at the church; your question is answered; rest con-

tented with the assurance of that fact. Laura is now with Margaret; I would see her with any one, rather than alone."

The once haughty Baronet, although assured of the evidences against him being destroyed, could not regain the cool look, the searching eye, for which he had once been so celebrated; still he felt himself more secure, and as he endeavoured to steel his mind against the inquisitive eyes of the beholders, he turned round, and saw the figure of the aged Herbert standing near the door; he startled back towards the window, and being quite unprepared for the intrusion, he ejaculated, "God of heaven! what power has brought you here?"

"I come to take leave of my old master's son," said Herbert; "these gray hairs could not descend in the grave, until my tongue had mentioned my heart's warmest wish—your forgiveness! I bear no enmity; my silence is sealed, my appearance now confirms what you may have heard from others, my having escaped a death."—

"Hush! hush, good Herbert!"

“ I forgive you, Sir, and may you live in peace !”

●

“ Stay, Herbert, this purse may purchase you some comforts in your age.”

“ If, in my poverty, Sir, I did not injure my old master’s son, my age will not require a bribe to keep a secret. Good bye, Sir, good bye !”

The old man bowed lowly ; the abashed criminal returned the purse to his pocket ; and he turned away from the door ashamed at the rebuke which his insulting offer had drawn from an old servant.

Far different had been the course pursued by Margaret ; she had assumed a perfect freedom of manner, as if she had no cause for repentance ; and Laura as innocent as her friend was guilty, soon forgot all her lurking suspicion, and with the generosity of a girl, she censured herself for having ever suspected such a friend as Margaret, of any sinister intentions. Margaret’s object was to glean from Laura some account of Albert, and in short, to obtain from her all the intelligence in her possession ; but

in vain her ingenuity was expended ; Laura had nothing to tell ; she only knew her future husband was Albert de Lancy ; how he acquired his wealth she was ignorant, and although the questions were put with all the ingenuity, of a clever and deceitful woman, no satisfactory answer, was elicited. She then endeavoured to alarm Laura, hinting, that the wealth was fictitious ; but this likewise failed, for a large sum had already been placed in the hands of trustees ; the last subject, was the one touched with the most exquisite delicacy, the discovery of the fraud practiced upon Albert ; Laura's innocent reply, to some allusion to Raven Castle, awoke all the suspicions in Margaret's bosom. " Mr. Law," she said, " calls me Lady de Lancy, and has promised me for to morrow's present, the property of Raven Castle !"

There was no longer any deceit in Margaret's manner, the very rage in which she resented the implication, alarmed her companion, who, in her turn, soothed the anger of her pretended friend, by declaring her belief, that Mr. Law

had said it as a jest ; but the words struck deep upon her mind ; she already thought herself, like the bird in the fable, despoiled of the feathers which belonged to a prouder bird, herself the miserable crow, without the peacock's plumage. Guilt is ever suspicious ; Margaret in an instant thought of a thousand plans to avoid the exposure she anticipated, and in the agony of thought, became absent in mind ; questions were asked, which she neither heard, or answered, and to some remark relative to Herbert, she startled for a moment, then passing her hand over her forehead, murmured, " I am very, very ill !" suddenly left the room. Her husband was apprized of it, and he instantly ran to her assistance. " Stand back," said the haughty hypocrite, " you have no right here. I married Sir Ronald de Lancy, not an adventurer. The title I will keep to my death. Though I wander through the world, I will not descend to be called like a shop-keeper's wife, and hear the girl who was my bridesmaid, usurp not only my name, but my residence."

" Margaret," said Sir Ronald, in his usual

slow manner, "your pride has ever been my unhappiness. I am the cause of your displeasure, but remember my crime does not excuse your fault; you swore to be my wife in sickness or in health, in weal or in woe; now show yourself not unworthy of your sex, and in being restored to your title, and to Raven Castle, learn to respect my brother, who refuses what is his, and who leaves to us and to our child, the inheritance of which he has been robbed."

"Been robbed!" said the haughty woman, "he was unfit for the office, so he resigned it. I tell you, Sir Ronald, he must be ignorant of the facts; he has made a virtue of ceding a right which he could not have maintained, and he has, with the same cleverness, that he has turned the ungrateful world to account, made even you grateful for a gift, he never believed was his to offer."

"Be silent, woman, and learn to respect one who respects his name too much to cast the slightest slander upon it; he does not claim the title, although by some extraordinary occur-

rence, your father's papers have fallen into his hands ; he is aware of every fact, so be modest and reserved, where haughtiness and boldness might be our ruin."

"Then, I have no occasion for Blackburn's assistance, he is not far from this door. Go, Sir Ronald, send him back to the country. I am quite recovered now, in a minute I will see Albert ; but go dispatch that man, or he might mar the marriage."

Blackburn had not escaped the vigilance of two persons, who accidentally passing the square, recognized him loitering in a suspicious manner—the rector of the village of Raven, and his son ; the surly dark countenance of the wretch might have attracted less inquisitive people than the rector, nor were they less astonished when they recognized Sir Ronald de Lancy, who, after whispering to his tenant, gave him money, and instantly returned.

The evening before the marriage, all who were to assist at the ceremony, but the young midshipman, were present ; there was that forced gaiety which betrays itself, and which

occasions the ghost of laughter, rather than its reality. In Mr. Law's face, there was an evident thoughtfulness, and his abstraction of mind was more remarkable, as he never found fault with the length of a remark, or the waste of a word; his eye seemed to wander from Albert to Laura, and from Laura to Albert, but he never betrayed his thoughts, although from broken expressions, such as, "strange coincidents—tally exactly—impossible—charming girl—fine looking man—we shall see, &c., altered his face entirely!"

This last remark was occasioned by the altered appearance in Albert. When he arrived in London, he wore mustachios, and a large forest of whiskers, as if cultivated to plant out his features; he was much sunburnt, and his face, from the profusion of hair, looked round and plump; the day before the present, he had cut down the forest, and shaved off the mustachios; his face now looked thin and peaked, the cheek bones looked higher and more prominent, the eyes appeared larger and lighter, and few who saw him, for the first time a fortnight before, could have recognized him

again ; it was his principal occupation, instead of looking at his bride, to watch every one else of the company, and Law remarked, that when any one seemed remarking him, he grew uneasy, and flushed.

“ One bumper to the bride,” said Law, as he seemed to have overcome all reluctance ; “ one bumper to her before we part ; to-morrow at nine o'clock, we meet here ; your son, Sir,” he continued, addressing Laura’s uncle, “ will, I hope, be present, he must be welcome, and may be useful. Laura Mackenzie, to your health, may you never regret the alliance, or I never blush for my client.”

The toast was drank, and more than one remarked the sudden alteration in Albert’s countenance, but it soon cleared up again. After one, or two dismal attempts at hilarity, the party separated, and if any prophecy of the future could have been drawn from that evening’s heaviness, it would have been a bold pair who ventured on the morrow’s marriage.

“ You are resolved, Laura, on this match ? ” said Law, when the company had withdrawn.
“ Why ask me such a question ? You fed

my brightest hopes, you nursed the growing love, and now you ask me, if I am resolved? As surely as there is a power above us, nothing shall make me waver; he is my heart's only object. I would sooner rot in a goal with him, than live in Raven Castle with another."

The morning came, the bride was dressed, the breakfast seemed untouched, for on these occasions the eye is more regaled, than the palate. The carriages were prepared; the bridegroom was already in the church; near the altar sat a pale youngster, with an eye restless, and inquisitive. It was fixed upon the bridegroom, and at each turn as the anxious partner of Laura's future life paced the church in all the anxiety of the event, the youngster endeavoured to stand up more closely to observe him; his colour came and then forsook his face; the clerk brought him, unasked, some water, which he refused; and when he beckoned him away, his eye was fixed upon Albert de Lancy. At last the party arrived, and his cousin, even at that moment, approached to be made acquainted with him; his excessive agitation

alarmed her, and Law who supported her, asked the cause.

"Oh, Sir," said the youngster, "if I could but delay this marriage for a week, I should be so happy!"

Laura started back, and asked, "For what reason?"

"I cannot swear to the man now, but by that time, I could have proof."

"Of what?" said Laura.

"He is—"

"Who?" said Laura.

"The pirate of the West Indies, the Captain of the Spitfire!"

There was a moment's hesitation, when Laura, drawing herself proudly up, walked to the altar, and giving her hand to her future husband, in ten minutes' time left the church, his companion, his wife!

THE END.

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